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125

Issue 125 | May 2016

## Design a 1920s costume

Create a stylized character  
costume with Randy  
Bishop

## plus

Effervescent painting  
**Nature inspired sketches**  
Explore light and color  
**Create a futuristic city**  
Build a sci-fi environment  
**and much more!**



# Editor's Letter



**ANNIE MOSS**  
Junior Editor

**2dartist is now on Facebook!**

## Welcome to 2dartist issue 125!

This month in *2dartist* we take a look inside the sketchbooks of the wonderful Alena Tkach, who creates illustrations for games and children's books. We also speak to freelance illustrator and concept artist Damian Audino about how he discovered digital art and launched a career in the industry.

This month's issue also features the work of traditional artist Dorian Vallejo, who shows us his exceptional paintings, and José Julián Londoño Calle breaks down how he creates a sci-fi environment. Randy Bishop explains how to design a 1920s inspired character costume, and Marcin Rubinkowski demonstrates how to create a futuristic glass city. Juan Novelletto concludes his series on the fundamentals of sci-fi art, and Noely Ryan speed paints a fantasy troll hunt!

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Damian Audino is a freelance illustrator from Perth, Australia. He works mostly on games with outsourcing studios mostly creating illustrative work, and occasionally producing concept art as well.



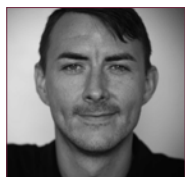
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Dorian Vallejo is a fine artist from Easton, PA in the United States. He creates fine art, portraits and illustrations, and was influenced by his formal education at the School of Visual Arts in NY.



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Alena Tkach is a freelance illustrator, character designer and animator based in Ukraine. She works mostly on games and children's books, and created her first illustrated book in 2014.



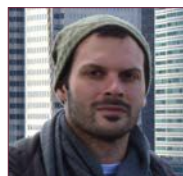
### NOELY RYAN

Noely Ryan is an artist living and working in Dublin, Ireland. He creates concepts, digital matte paintings and motion graphics for the television and film industry, mainly in Ireland.



### RANDY BISHOP

Randy Bishop is a freelance character designer and illustrator from Idaho. He has a passion for storytelling and his clients include DreamWorks Animation Television, Axis Animation and Flaunt Productions.



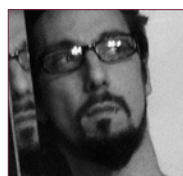
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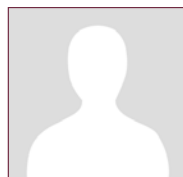
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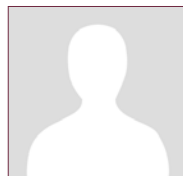
### BASTIEN LECOUFFE DEHARME

Bastien Lecouffe Deharme is a French illustrator and digital painting instructor now based in the US. He has worked professionally since 2005 on numerous illustrations for books, magazines and games.



### MARCIN RUBINKOWSKI

Marcin Rubinkowski is an environmental concept artist based in Los Angeles. His work is a dialogue between dreamy reality filtered through his imagination and the deeper symbolic meanings in often unnoticed details.



### WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUBMIT TO 2DARTIST?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, writers and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: [annie@3dtotal.com](mailto:annie@3dtotal.com).

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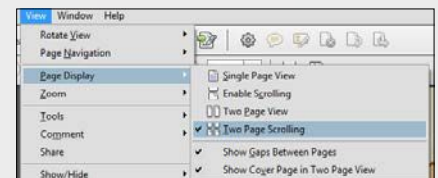
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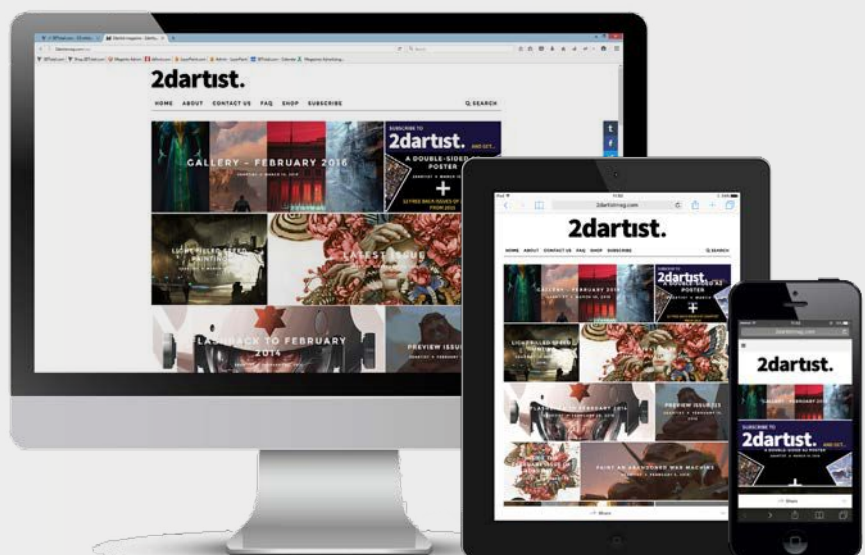
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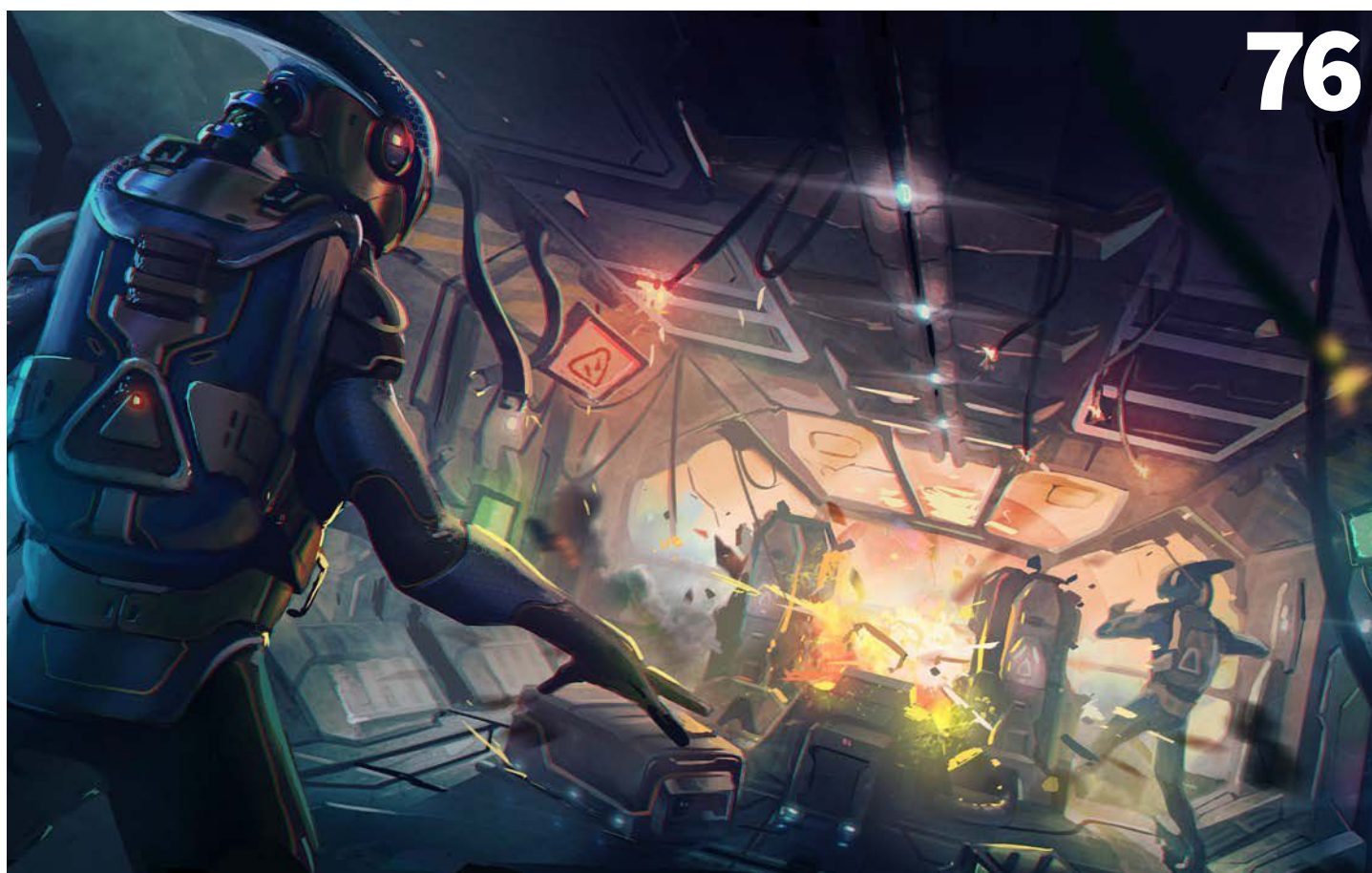


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# Exploring light and color

Up-and-coming freelance illustrator and concept artist Damian Audino showcases his work and discusses entering the digital art world... ▶



## The Artist



**Damian Audino**  
[artstation.com/artist/damianaudino](http://artstation.com/artist/damianaudino)

**Interviewed by:**  
Annie Moss

Damian Audino is a freelance illustrator from Perth, Australia. He works mostly on games with outsourcing studios, mostly creating illustrative work and occasionally producing concept art as well.



It was the work of Jaime Jones and Craig Mullins which first captured the imagination of freelance illustrator Damian Audino. Originally he had wanted to become a graphic designer, and at that point he was completely unaware of the concept art world or the potential of a viable career path in this area. However, having been inspired by these artists, Damian began to explore Photoshop and digital tools realizing that there was more to digital art than he had at first thought. He began to explore new ways to be creative, and launched himself onto a new career path.

Since then Damian has worked steadily as a freelance illustrator for trading card games, developing a talent for colorful artworks which place emphasis on light and a sense of motion. Here, Damian talks about how he finds motivation by throwing photos down onto a canvas and drawing on top, and how constantly learning new tricks in 2D and 3D art keeps his work fresh and exciting.

**2dartist:** Hi Damian, thank you for talking to 2dartist! Could you kick things off by introducing yourself a bit to readers who may not be familiar with you and your work?

**Damian Audino:** Hey, thanks for the opportunity! I'm a freelancer from Perth, Western Australia, and I've been working professionally (actually getting an okay income) for only about a year. I mostly work in Photoshop but use 3D as well to help create a more ►

- *Skull warrior* – This was out of Damian's comfort zone as he had never really done a skeletal warrior and thought it would be neat to do!



- *Regal Ship* – A ship sketch, experimenting with shape



- *Horse man* – Damian avoids a rigidly defined color palette for his works, confidently exploring what works for each piece





● *Sky Fortress* – Damian likes to create a sense of motion in his work







## “Just being confident enough to lay the strokes down is a big part of what makes something good to look at”

realistic feel to my work. I think it's important for my work to look fairly realistic as it's necessary for what I eventually want to get into, which is film.

**2da:** What was it about the digital tools that made you want to pursue a career in the industry?

**DA:** Well I actually started off wanting to be a graphic designer a while ago, but noticed some artworks from Jaime Jones and Craig Mullins (I think this might be most people's story). At that point I had no idea what concept art was or even that it was a viable career path as we didn't have much of a film or game industry in Australia, at least not one that needed much concept art attached to it. So I feel I got into it quite late. But I realized that Photoshop could be used for so much more than I previously thought, and once I got my first tablet (I still have the same one) I never looked back.

**2da:** Where do you draw your inspiration from? What influences your work and motivates you?

**DA:** Inspiration is hard to put a finger on; recently it was after watching the new *Battlefield 1* trailer and then reading about World War I and how horrific it was – it made me want to do a piece on the fear people would of felt being in that war.

Sometimes I'm not inspired and I have to sit at my desk and grind out some sketches before my brain ticks over to an idea. I can never rely just on inspiration or I'd only get half the work done that I usually would do.

Art is freeing and inspired but I feel that what I do (illustration and concept art) is more about learning a process that works and is efficient, and less about “whatever happens.” That being said, sometimes a part of that process is about letting go and finding shapes to design with at the start of a new painting. So they can both work with each other. I don't know, it's all very convoluted!

**2da:** Your work often features brilliant, vivid light and color. How do you maintain balance in your work with such a bold palette?

**DA:** I feel strongly myself about not working so rigidly when it comes to color; I won't set out a palette and I won't care if I put a few different colors (in a similar spectrum) in one place. In fact I aim to do that most of the time as it can bring things to life. Just being confident enough to lay the strokes down is a big part of what makes something good to look at; that ►

● *Fabulous Knight* – Another breakthrough for Damian personally; he learned a lot about photo manipulation and pairing it with brushstrokes to create something energetic and realistic



## If you could write a letter to your younger self, just starting out as an artist, what advice would you give?

Hey Damian,

It's Damian here. Maybe don't work in a warehouse and for a call center in your early twenties as it seems to destroy your soul. And also start doing art before you hit twenty four and make it a bit easier for yourself. Don't go to uni because it costs too much and the lecturers don't really understand what concept art is yet – maybe buy a Gnomon DVD. Also remember to call your mum, she raised you, don't be so flippant.

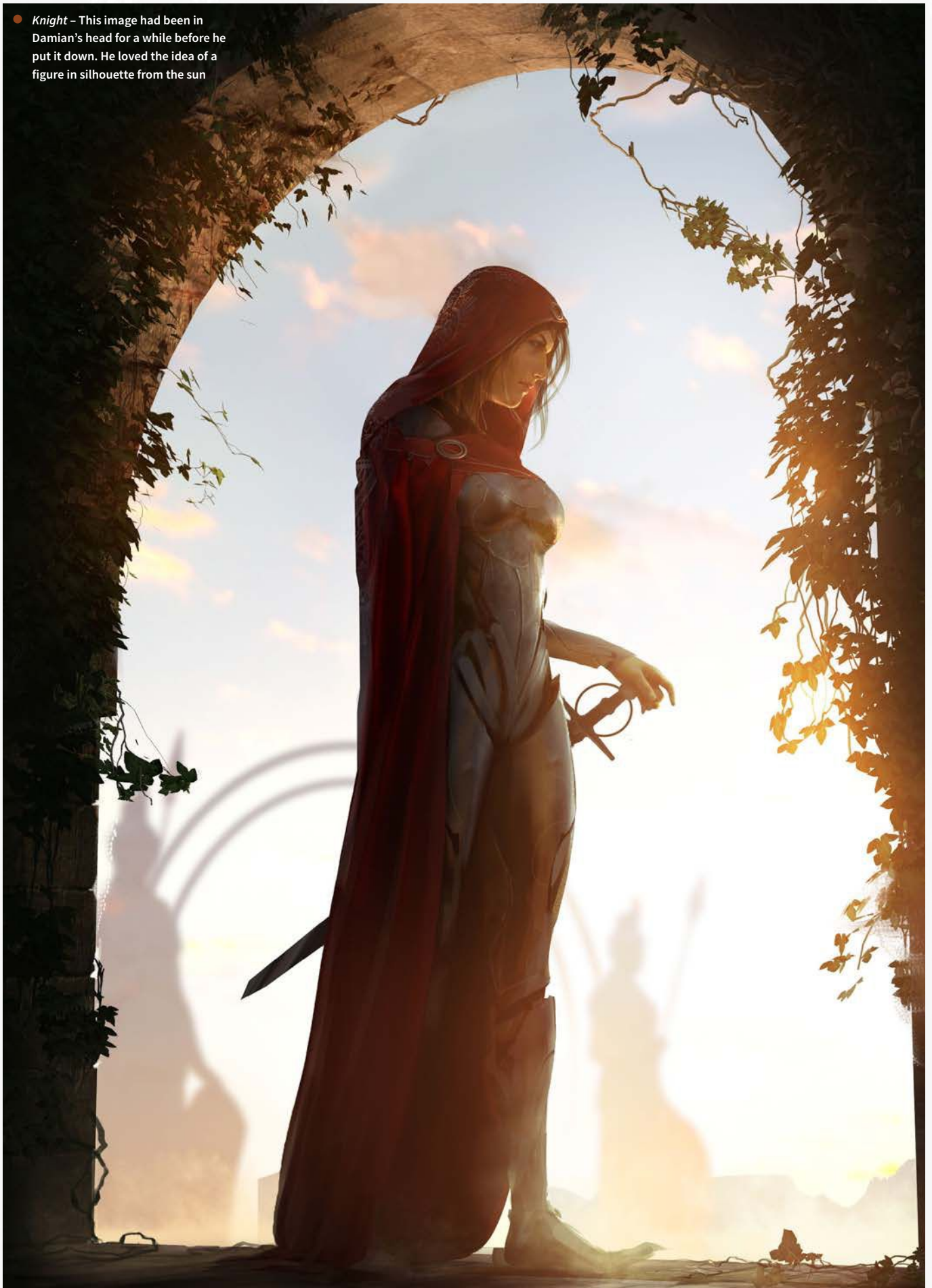
## What do you think has been most influential to your career success?

I wouldn't say any one thing has been influential to any success (I still don't feel successful but maybe that's a good thing). All I can say is that there are plenty in this business that I look up to and the one thing I see them all doing is learning new things and keeping interested in what they're doing.

I would also say that I have a hunger that's always there, to be better than I was yesterday; it's something that has never gone away. That hunger is something I've noticed in many successful people in any profession; to always try and one-up yourself and to always try learning new techniques and acquiring new information.



● *Knight* – This image had been in Damian's head for a while before he put it down. He loved the idea of a figure in silhouette from the sun





- *Trenches* – A recent piece that Damian made trying to capture the fear of war



can be with the shapes that you're creating, or it can be with the colors you're putting on top – confidence is key.

Light is tricky sometimes but my main thought is that I throw it down wherever I want people to look. The eye will naturally want to follow the light so I try to make the most interesting aspects the areas with the greatest illumination – most of the time.

**2da:** You work predominantly as a character artist but also like to work on environments too; how do you adapt your skills for the different practices?

**DA:** Studies mostly; if you aren't comfortable with environments, then practice them! I also try to establish what I want people to look at. I'll ask myself the question "Am I painting a character in a scene?" or "Am I painting a scene with a character there for

**"If my main focus is the character, then the environment around them is only meant to add to their story and to serve the character itself"**

scale or to add some form of life to it?" They are two different types of painting. If my main focus is the character, then the environment around them is only meant to add to their story and to serve the character itself, so I won't spend too much time making an awesome looking intense background if I don't want people to look at that. Choose your subject and base the painting around that. It makes life easier, and makes the image better.

**2da:** What do you like to paint and draw when you are working on personal projects?

**DA:** I have a sketchbook full of weird heads of people with pushed proportions and other oddities. When it comes to actual projects though, I'm still in the process of acquiring more work, so I base my portfolio around what jobs I want to go for. At the moment I'm going for realism and a feeling of being in a scene with characters, as I want to work in film and in more realistic games.

So I believe that's an important thing to feel when working on those types of projects. My sketchbook is where I let everything go and just do weird things, but I honestly really enjoy the challenge of larger illustrations and learning new techniques as well. So at the moment most of my free time is spent learning new things in 3D and watching plenty of tutorials.

**2da:** When and where do you feel you are at your most creative?



**DA:** On the couch with my sketchbook and a scotch; I usually get some pretty cool ideas there. I like having background noise and being comfortable. My office is great too but I usually go there after I have the creative ideas I pop into my sketchbook. Sometimes it's even as I'm about to fall asleep and I'll turn over and write something I've thought of down to remind myself to get to it in the morning. Sometimes also while I'm daydreaming and walking my dog. Going outside gets the brain ticking.

**2da:** Which artists do you admire and how did they influence your work?

**DA:** Jaime Jones was my number one influence, especially in the beginning. It was through him that I found out about Craig Mullins, and it was through Craig Mullins I went down the rabbit hole to where I find myself today.

Honestly there is so much talent out there now that it's hard to pick any one person or even a couple of people that influence me, because every time I go online I see something awesome. In terms of the masters, I would say that Ilya Repin and William Adolphe Bouguereau were pretty influential to me. Bouguereau's use of color, especially in skin tones, opened my mind to the reality that there is never just a single color in any one thing – life is a brilliant mix of everything. And Repin's lighting was so realistic, especially in some of his larger scenes, it taught me that you can have extremely realistic and powerful images if you can get the lighting correct.

**2da:** What do you find most challenging about working as a freelance artist?

**DA:** Getting work first and foremost. Getting recognition of your work takes some time as well.

Often I feel like I'm bashing my head against a wall, but that might just be my own thoughts and not what's actually happening. Looking back to this time last year I had hardly any work and now I've got a bit so I guess I'm doing something right.

Staying fully self-motivated and getting into routines is sometimes hard as well, but I imagine it happens to most people. I love what I do and I'm lucky enough to even get paid to do it, so I just knuckle down and try to keep making the next image better than the last.

**2da:** What would your typical working day be like?

**DA:** Wake up at 7:30 am, eat, go into the office and check emails and ArtStation to see if anyone loves and can validate my existence on various social media. Then I start sketching things. If I have a job to ►

do I'll usually just start on that straight away .If not, I'll try and learn something new and apply it to a new illustration as well.

This continues until my dog yells at me to go for a walk which I am obliged to do, then I usually go to grappling, Jiu Jitsu or mixed martial arts. Then I'm back to work some more and eat dinner and hug my partner until about 12. And that's it, super exciting stuff right?

**2da:** Do you have any tricks or tips to keep yourself motivated on a difficult project?

**DA:** I usually like to create a good atmosphere in the painting through lighting and mood as well as a sense of motion. If I can get all three down then I'm good to keep going with a piece. I usually only find it hard to get motivated when I have a blank canvas in front of me, so I try to alleviate that situation as soon as possible.

I'll throw photos down and draw on top, or I'll try to learn some new tricks in 3D and then get excited to apply them to something. Just having any sort of image in front of me to get something going is usually enough to get the ball rolling.

If you're losing motivation in a piece then it sometimes means it's not going down the right track, and I would just scrap it and try again. In my opinion, if you're not enjoying working on it, people most likely won't enjoy looking at it, as that energy can come through in a piece.

**2da:** Are there any areas in the digital art world that you'd like to branch into and why?

**DA:** I think I'm pretty set for now. I wanted to branch more into 3D but I've taken that step and have really taken to trying to learn about it more. I'm not sure where else I would go except maybe learning about game engines such as Unreal Engine, but at the moment that's not a big issue, so I guess I'll keep on keeping on.

If anything I would probably regress back to more line work or practicing fundamentals, as the more 3D I'm learning, I am doing less of that and I'm acutely aware that's not a good thing. So I'll probably ramp that up soon as well.

**2da:** What has been your favorite project to work on so far and why?

**DA:** Just recently I got asked to help out on a project for a really big client and I was pretty stoked about that, but I'm not sure I can say who or what it's for. This has been my favorite so far as the ideas were fun and right up my alley.

## ● Ice lands – A matte painted environment



## Is there anything you think budding artists should try to avoid?

Don't fall into a comfort zone for too long, they can be handy sometimes, but don't think that because you can draw a decent face that makes you set for life. Get out of your comfort zone often and fail a lot. The only way you improve is when you fail, so try to enjoy it and know that every time a piece doesn't work out how you wanted it to, you're one step closer to nailing it.

**2da:** Do you have any plans for future projects? What exciting things should we look out for?

**DA:** Professionally? I'm under an NDA and can't say unfortunately! But in my personal work I'm teaching myself a better process for hard surface modeling, so probably spaceships on far-away worlds. It's

something I've always loved to look at but never felt confident in pulling off. I'm really working towards some more sci-fi pieces like that. ●

**Thank you Damian for chatting to 2dartist!**





● *Hand of the Witch* – Concept of a cursed tree a witch was hung from









**Dorian Vallejo**  
dorianvallejo.com

Dorian Vallejo is a fine artist from Easton, PA. He creates fine art, portraits and illustrations and was influenced by his formal education at the School of Visual Arts in NY.

A R T I S T   S P O T L I G H T

# Effervescent painting

Traditional artist Dorian Vallejo discusses his beautiful work exploring the duality of life and levels of consciousness ▶

Exploring themes of consciousness and unconsciousness, traditional painter Dorian Vallejo creates dream worlds using ink, pencils, oil paint, acrylic, and watercolor. He is intrigued by how different levels of consciousness affect our philosophical and psychological outlook, and also how these elements shape our perception of reality.

Learning from mythology, readings and audio lectures, Dorian makes a regular habit of drawing and writing to capture the waves of inspiration which he can then develop into finished works of art. This month, Dorian talks

to us about his interest in comics, anime and pop culture; his interest in the duality of life, and how failure can be your best friend if you use it constructively.

**2dartist:** Hello Dorian! Thanks for talking to 2dartist. First off, could you introduce yourself with a bit about your background and projects?

**Dorian Vallejo:** Some of my earliest memories are of drawing and reading comics. I started receiving commissions when I was eleven but I seriously started thinking about painting and drawing as a career when I was sixteen.

My parents, artists themselves, sent me to several art schools, the most beneficial of which was the School of Visual Arts (SVA) in New York City. There, I majored in illustration, and started working professionally first for Marvel Comics, and then eventually for every major book publishing house in New York.

It was at SVA that I was first introduced to the distinction between fine art and illustration. SVA is also where I was introduced to portraiture. These days I focus most of my attention on producing gallery paintings for various different exhibitions around the country. ►



● *Dreamer In Between* – Inspired by the concept of allowing nature to guide us, the center of the circle relates to the covenant with life and the eternal mother © Dorian Vallejo



- *The Mind is a Garden of Adjacent Possibilities* – Inspired by the concept of allowing nature to guide us, the center of the circle relates to the covenant with life and the eternal mother © Dorian Vallejo





**2da:** What or who encouraged you to take up a career as a freelance artist?

**DV:** Both of my parents were artists so the reality of art as a career possibility was always present by their example. I was never pushed; rather, I was allowed to come to it on my own after drawing and painting for a good part of my youth.

Later, in school, my thoughts about what I wanted to do with art began to take shape. It took years to test those ideas. The search was always to find something that was in alignment with my values. This way I could be proud of what I did and happy with the way I was spending my time.

**“One aspect of what I’m exploring with my work is a play on the conscious and unconscious. I’m intrigued by how the two interact with each other to affect our psychology and philosophy”**

**2da:** You have said that your work explores the realms of existence, can you tell us more about these ideas?

**DV:** One aspect of what I’m exploring with my work is a play on the conscious and unconscious. I’m intrigued by how the two interact with each

other to affect our psychology and philosophy. Also, how they shape our reality. For many of us this duality – the yin and yang of life – can conjure forth poetic moments of internal reflection. That reflection on the mystery is visual for me.

**2da:** Where do you turn to for inspiration? Are there any artists you like to reference?

**DV:** I try to be open to inspiration from as many sources as possible. Most days, I maintain a regular habit of engaging intellectually stimulating material, by reading, and listening to audio lectures. Regular drawing and writing are also an important part of the process. I found



● *Shadow Dance* – Dorian hired professional dancers for paintings where he wanted a graceful flowing movement because they have a greater awareness of their bodies © Dorian Vallejo



## ⚡ DORIAN'S SIGNIFICANT ARTWORK

In my late teens I fell in love with drawing from life. Shortly thereafter, I began an almost daily practice of drawing the people in my life that were closest to me. In this way, I've done literally thousands of drawings, simultaneously touching on the two values that I consider to be the most intrinsic part of my being. One is my love of creating art directly from life; the other is my love for another human being. This habit of marrying the two most fundamental aspects of my life has become one of the strongest spiritual pillars in my life as an artist.

This drawing was done of my son when he was eleven. Fully aware of what I would love most, he offered to pose for me on my birthday. Every age has its own unique beauty. However, this moment in time, poised between the sweet gentleness of childhood, and the inevitable hard practicality of adulthood is a gift I will always treasure.



early on that inspiration comes in waves, so by developing a system of capturing ideas I don't have to go searching. Increasingly, I also make time to look at social media – a never-ending stream of creativity.

**2da:** You manage to capture really powerful expressions and light in your paintings; do you paint from life, use many references or are they from your imagination?

**DV:** In short, all of the above. I work from life and draw from imagination almost every day. It helps inform my ideas and sensitize me to where I want to go with my work. When I want to develop something further, I'll often work from life for

six to eight hour periods. Just as often, I'll take photos. This is the tricky part because the photo is never really what I wanted from life.

In the end, I try not to be formulaic about things. Instead, I look for ways to put myself in a place where I'm not sure how to solve things. This is because not every solution can be arrived at by the same approach.

**2da:** What advice can you give to our readers who want to develop their drawing and painting techniques in a similar manner?

**DV:** That's tricky because everyone is different and I don't like putting myself in a position of

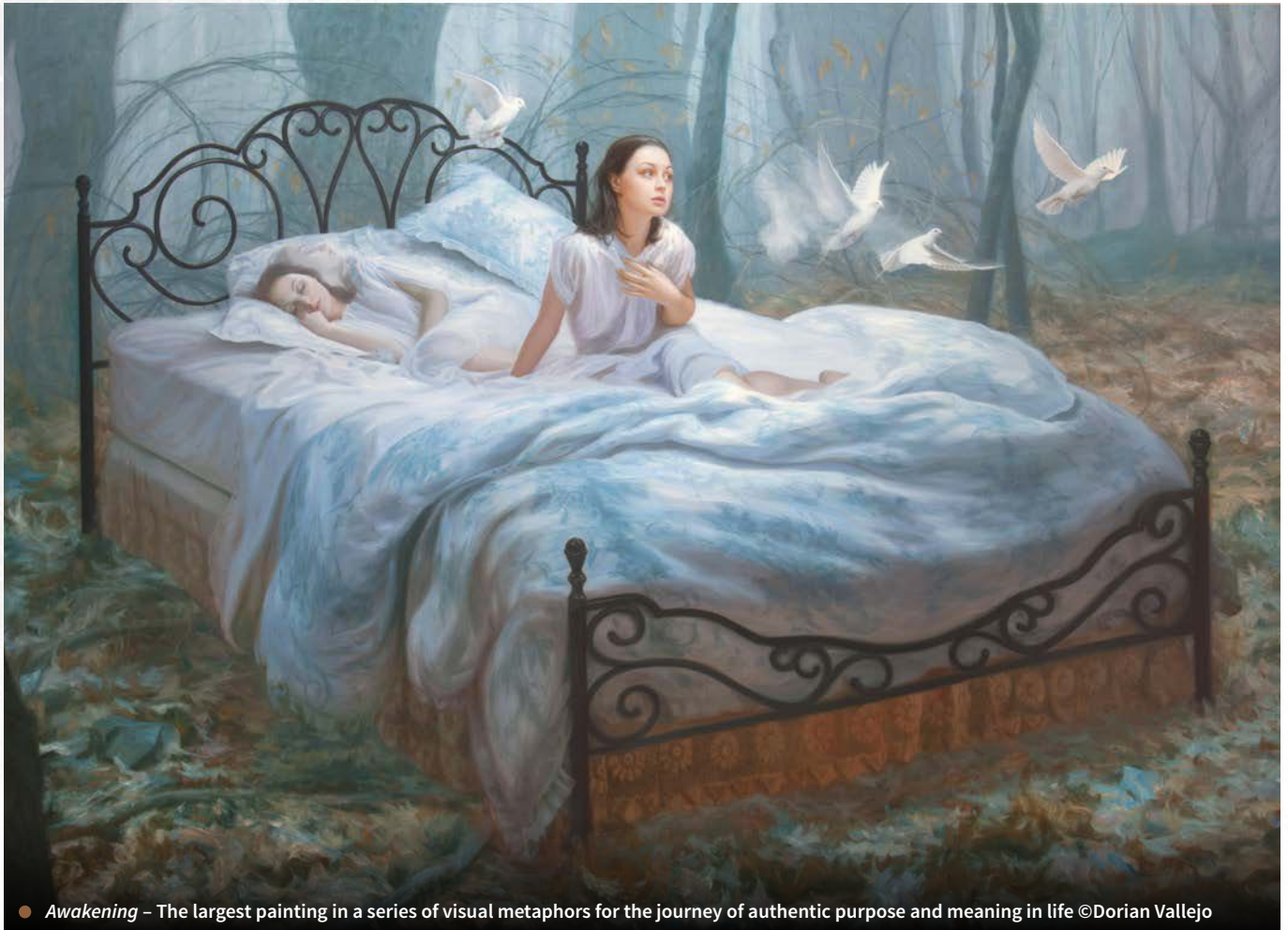
authority. Generally, I'd suggest studying with people who have more experience than you do. Also, make space for ideas that run counter to your own. I find that people who don't allow for the free exchange of ideas have the biggest impediments to growth. Learning technique is akin to learning the ABCs, but genuine artistic expression requires openness.

Another suggestion might be to look differently at things that ordinarily produce fear. An obvious example would be failure. Failure is often our best friend from which we can learn the most. None of us know everything. Hurry up and fail. Then have the courage and honesty to seek out the best solution. Then repeat that process. ►



● *Blossom* - Oil on canvas 44" x 50" © Dorian Vallejo





● **Awakening** – The largest painting in a series of visual metaphors for the journey of authentic purpose and meaning in life ©Dorian Vallejo

**2da:** What are your preferred tools to work with and why?

**DV:** I prefer all things traditional. The computer is a wonderful tool and I love Photoshop. Very often, there's always something I'd like to learn next with computers. Additionally, I'm a huge fan of other people's digital 2D and 3D work.

However, when I think about where I'm happiest, I prefer spending my time painting and drawing. I like to use ink, pencils, oil paint, acrylic, watercolor and so on. I don't mean to be critical in any way. I'm simply more attached to the real world than the virtual.

**2da:** Do you have a particular place you like to go to draw? Do you create your works in a studio, at home or out in nature?

**DV:** I try not to be formulaic about anything I create if possible – not even when it comes to my workspace. I'll bring some drawing materials with me wherever I go, and then leave sketchpads, paper and materials in every room of the house; there are also materials in the car. I like to be as flexible as possible in my practice and make it easy to get started.

**2da:** What has been your favorite project to work on so far?

**DV:** The project I'm currently working on is usually my favorite. Whether it's tiny or large, a rapid sketch or an extended project, I've usually set something up that I find very challenging.

**2da:** How do you deal with a challenging project? Do you have any tips for our readers?

**DV:** I love challenges. This is because they reveal weaknesses. When things are going too smoothly, I'll look for ways to ratchet it up. Then I'll stick with the project until I have a solution I feel is the best I'm capable of at that moment. A large part of the creative experience for me is about continued growth. I can only do that by honestly addressing challenges that are beyond my scope.

**2da:** Are there any other skills and techniques you would like to learn in the future? Are there any materials you would like to experiment with?

**DV:** Oh sure. At this point I have a long list so I'll just to name a few. I've wanted to learn 3D for a while. I've spent a little time with it but not enough to be truly useful. Etching has always

been interesting to me. I'd also like a deeper understanding of storytelling. It's a cliché, but I find the more I know, the more I realize how little I know.

**2da:** What has your experience as a freelance artist been like? What lessons have you learned?

**DV:** I have worked with various people in four distinct fields: illustration, portraiture, private commissions and galleries. Commissioned work is nice on multiple levels; the primary among them is that someone believes you can create art to meet their needs. Secondary, is the implied guarantee of payment. The lesson learned with commissions, is to view the art as a collaborative effort. Teamwork can have challenges, but it can also be extremely rewarding when communication goes well.

Gallery work is entirely different. There, the idea is to create art that is unique and personal. The production of art is different and there are no financial promises. The lesson of teamwork and good communication is still important.

**2da:** What does a working day in the life of Dorian look like? ►





● Dressing – Another drawing in Dorian's series of works based on the reality of life © Dorian Vallejo



**“I deliberately keep my work-flow partially open, to allow for organic growth”**

**DV:** My habit is to start the day with proper mental and physical alignment first. This usually consists of reading, writing, drawing (from life and or imagination), exercise, and breakfast. Then I get to business in an equally deliberate manner. I usually have a timer to mark out the different activities or I don't get as much done as I'd like.

I also keep lists and update them regularly. I prefer waking early but to be honest, the clock often shifts depending on how the second part of the day is going. Regardless of where the clock ends up, sleep is often six to eight hours.

**2da:** How do you like to spend your time when you aren't creating beautiful art?

**DV:** When I'm not actively creating art, I like to visit other artists' work, galleries, museums or consume art in some way. I also spend a good amount of time reading and learning new things. Then of course there are the usual movies, travel, and family.

**2da:** And finally, what can we look forward to from you next?

**DV:** That's harder to answer. This is mainly because I don't like to be too predictable; even to myself. I deliberately keep my work-flow partially open, to allow for organic growth.

That said I do have plans for several paintings and drawings that will pull out new tangents for me to explore. I've felt pretty clear about these new ideas but I keep stumbling because I'm not quite sure how to pull off what I want. The only thing I can say for sure is that I'll try to make the work better than what I've done previously. ●

**Thank you Dorian for taking the time to speak to 2dartist!**



● **Red Dance** – Oil on canvas, 77" × 44". Referencing fairytale fashion, by using couture dresses. Dorian met a woman who designed and sewed the dresses before posing for paintings © Dorian Vallejo

# SKETCH JOURNAL

— ★ —

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ALENA TKACH

Sketchbook

Explore the sketchbook of freelance  
illustrator Alena Tkach for games  
and children's books inspired by the  
natural world

## The Artist



**Alena Tkach**  
alenaatkach.com

Alena Tkach is a freelance  
illustrator, character  
designer and animator  
based in Ukraine. She  
works mostly on games  
and children's books,  
and created her first  
illustrated book in 2014.



### Discover the preferred brushes, textures and techniques used by Alena...

I have always drawn as long as I remember. Drawing has always been something natural for me, like a thing that anyone can do. When I was small my parents had no time to bring me to an art school for children, so I wasted lots of paper and sketchbooks at home and notebooks at school.

However, the understanding that drawing should become something bigger than a hobby was not easy. I like animals a lot and I was fond of biology in general at school, so I applied to the university to become a geneticist and I was going to start a career as a scientist.

The crucial moment was the beginning of the animal's physiology course in the third year of studying. Students had to dissect a frog, cut its head and take away its skin just to study how the nerve impulses go to the muscles. And that was the last straw for me. I understood that I am not a biologist like that; maybe I am a naturalist and artist. So within a year I applied to the Academy of Design and Arts.

**"Sketching is a good way to free the space in my mind for new ideas, not trying to keep everything in one place"**

I draw because I enjoy it; it's my way to say "Hi" to the world and to make someone's day better with my art. Most of my works are digital, but I like doing pencil sketches because I enjoy working with real materials. Digital sketching is faster and easier but pencil sketching is more joyful.

My sketchbook is a story of my artistic life, encouraging me to move on. Most of my sketches are done for work projects, but sometimes I do them just to have fun. Each sketch is a good starting point for a new piece of art, because I am sure that each new drawing teaches us something new and enriches our experience a bit. If I do not sketch the ideas coming to mind I may lose them, so sketching is a good way to free the space in my mind for new ideas, not trying to keep everything in one place.

#### Inspiration and ideas

I find inspiration mainly in nature. Since I love animals, plants, mountains, forests and anywhere

else I can travel to, every trip is invigorating and inspiring. Also, I spend some time watching online galleries, Instagram, blogs and Behance portfolios of contemporary illustrators. I work mostly with children's illustration and there are a lot of artists in this field to inspire me: Emilia Dziubak, Chuck Groenink, Oliver Jeffers, Polina Tsareva, Lisk Feng, Amélie Fléchais, and Oren Haskins.

I was lucky to meet my artist friends in a company we used to work for. We had a lot of awesome fun and a productive time together, helping each other to improve skills and evolve as artists. We all left, became freelancers and started an art group called KADKA. We have our blog and sometimes we co-operate for some projects. I appreciate our collaboration very much.

I get most of my ideas in the morning because I am an early riser. Another good way to get new ideas is to travel; it's quite good to refresh your mind and review your art, to experience new routes. For me good ideas are always something new based on something old. In fact, I understand the idea is good when I receive the audience reaction. In this way I recognize that something which was inside me and personal to me, which I tried to translate into my works, was accepted and understood. ►



● Sketch detail based on *The Summer Book* by Tove Jansson © Alena Tkach



● Sketching inspired by *The Summer*  
Book by Tove Jansson © Alena  
Tkach



02



● Sketching for the cover of the  
book *Lines* © Alena Tkach

03





● Sketch for the *Pinkerton: Little Big Adventure* series © Alena Tkach

## Materials

I sketch with simple pencils. Often it is Koh-I-Noor, 2B-4B. I feel like I can express everything I'd like to with a simple dark-gray line. I like the smooth effects and gradation of the pencil line thickness. Also, I like the unexpected effects that watercolor allows you to achieve. I used to watercolor some of my sketches, but recently I have eased off, maybe because I am too impatient to receive the final image.

Although my illustrations are digital, I appreciate a hand-drawn effect in digital drawings. That's why I like grainy brushes so much which allow you to get ragged edges on shapes, and rough lines. I think there is something childish and naïve in such methods, and they allow you to make additional connections with a viewer. Also in some of my illustrations I use textures of paper and watercolor to enhance the same effect.

Another exciting kind of material for me is printmaking. I like linocut and prints with cardboard. I adore this effect of half-printed lines and shapes – they look very natural and refined. I like that feeling of surprise and the unexpected textures you get with each new print.

## Sketching techniques

Most of my sketches are rough ideation and explorative sketches. These are speed doodles to show the form, values and details of the future drawing, as much as the composition of the ►

## PRO TIP

### Alena's favorite brushes

To tell you the truth I only use a few brushes that I love, but I use them to their fullest extent. These are my favorites. Brushes 1 and 2 are grainy brushes. The first was made by Denis Zilber, I found it some years ago on his blog ([deniszilber.blogspot.co.uk](http://deniszilber.blogspot.co.uk)). Since then it's my biggest and most fascinating discovery. Brush 3 is a Soft Round brush to get smooth gradients and brushes 4 and 5 are watercolor brushes to get nice textures.





## ⚡ ALENA'S SIGNIFICANT ARTWORK

### Illustration from "Pinkerton: Little Big Adventure" series, commissioned by Neonmob platform

This was the first image I came up with for the Pinkerton series. The whole set was significant for me. I had never created such a big series of works before. It was an exciting experience: I decided to try a new style and I was not disappointed with the result! It brought a lot of attention to my portfolio and influenced my subsequent artworks.



8  
[ PINKERTON ]  
- LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE -





05

whole page, rhythm and main points. Sometimes I use sketches for future coloring as they are, letting the pencil lines be obvious.

Sometimes sketches are just the starting point for further work. After a pause it can be difficult to start a new work and I feel something like "a fear of a clear page." In such cases I force myself to start drawing something, maybe not as perfect as I'd like, and then the work goes on. Moving on is the only way to move on, hah!

I remember one question from my best teacher when she saw my milk-and-water drawing. She asked me "Why do you dislike it so much?" It has followed me through the years. Now if I feel I

am not in love with my art I try to do everything possible to do it better. It's like, if I don't like it nobody will. I appreciate high quality most of all. I believe that the formal teaching I had has helped me to solve lots of questions.

When I applied for my first job I had advantages over the guys without an art education because I had ready-made decisions for compositions, choice of color and sketching skills.

But formal education is a double-edged sword. In one sense it tends to limit your imagination with the traditions you learn. So the best advice is to just keep your mind open and choose what you really like, resisting anything that confuses you.

Right now I am working as a children's illustrator but I am going to try in the future to explore my style in more adult illustration – but still with as much cuteness! ●

- 05 Close-up, *My First English Words* project © Alena Tkach
- 06 Work in progress, *My First English Words* project © Alena Tkach
- 07 Animals and birds for the book *My First English Words* © Alena Tkach









08 Another illustration inspired by *The Summer book* by Tove Jansson ©Alena Tkach





09 Sketching for the cover of the book *Lines*  
© Alena Tkach



# 2dartist

## Would you like to see your sketches featured in 2dartist magazine?

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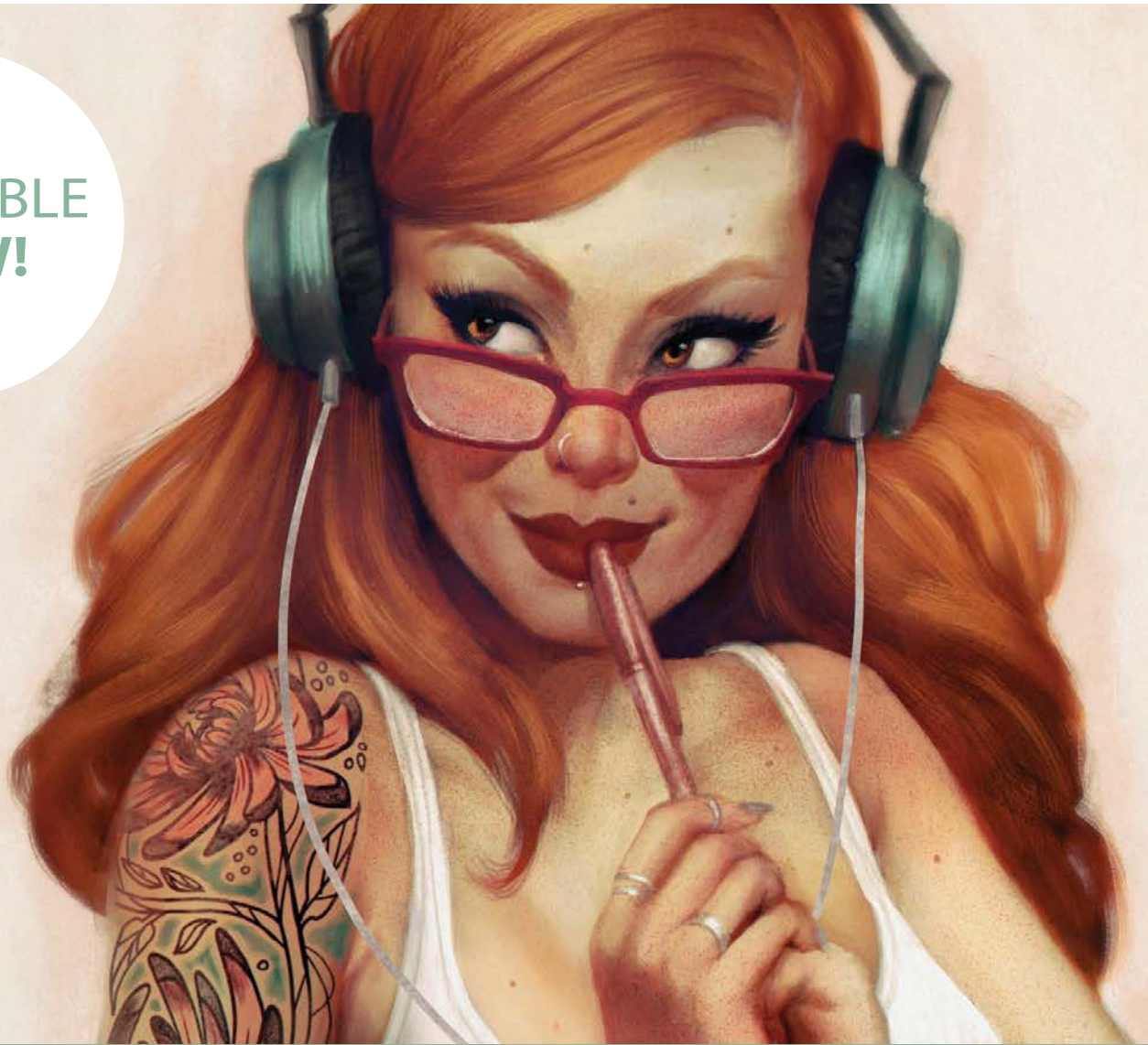
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# Art Gallery

Each issue the 2dartist team selects 10 of the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!



**Pawiro Shore**

Iacocca Khen

Year created: 2016

Web: [iacoccahen.artstation.com](http://iacoccahen.artstation.com)

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## Breach

Kenta Rosenfield

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Web: [rosenfield.wix.com/nazfa](http://rosenfield.wix.com/nazfa)







**Depot**

Ronnie Jensen

Year created: 2016

Web: [artstation.com/artist/ro9](http://artstation.com/artist/ro9)



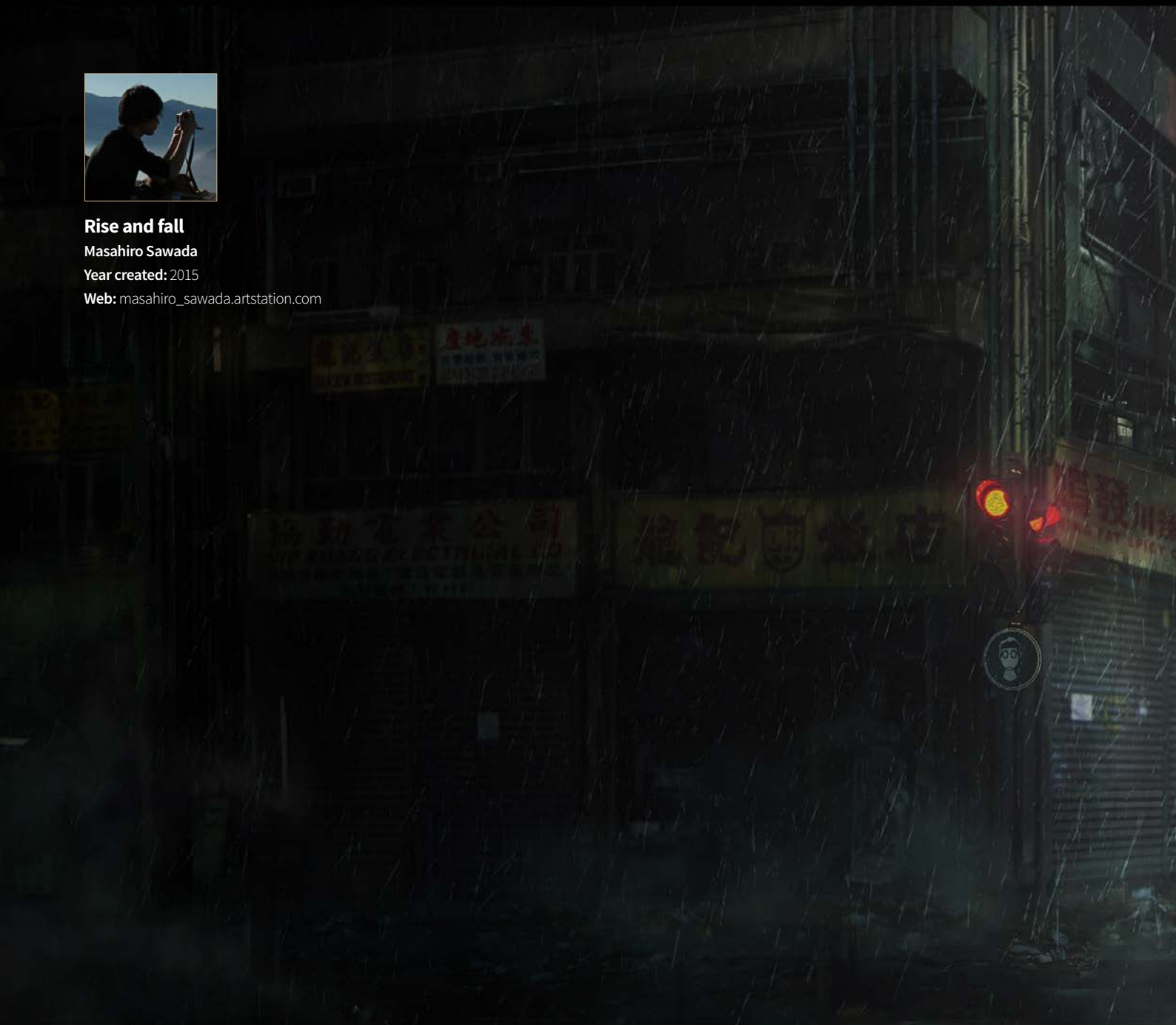


### Rise and fall

Masahiro Sawada

Year created: 2015

Web: [masahiro\\_sawada.artstation.com](http://masahiro_sawada.artstation.com)





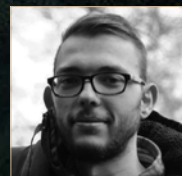
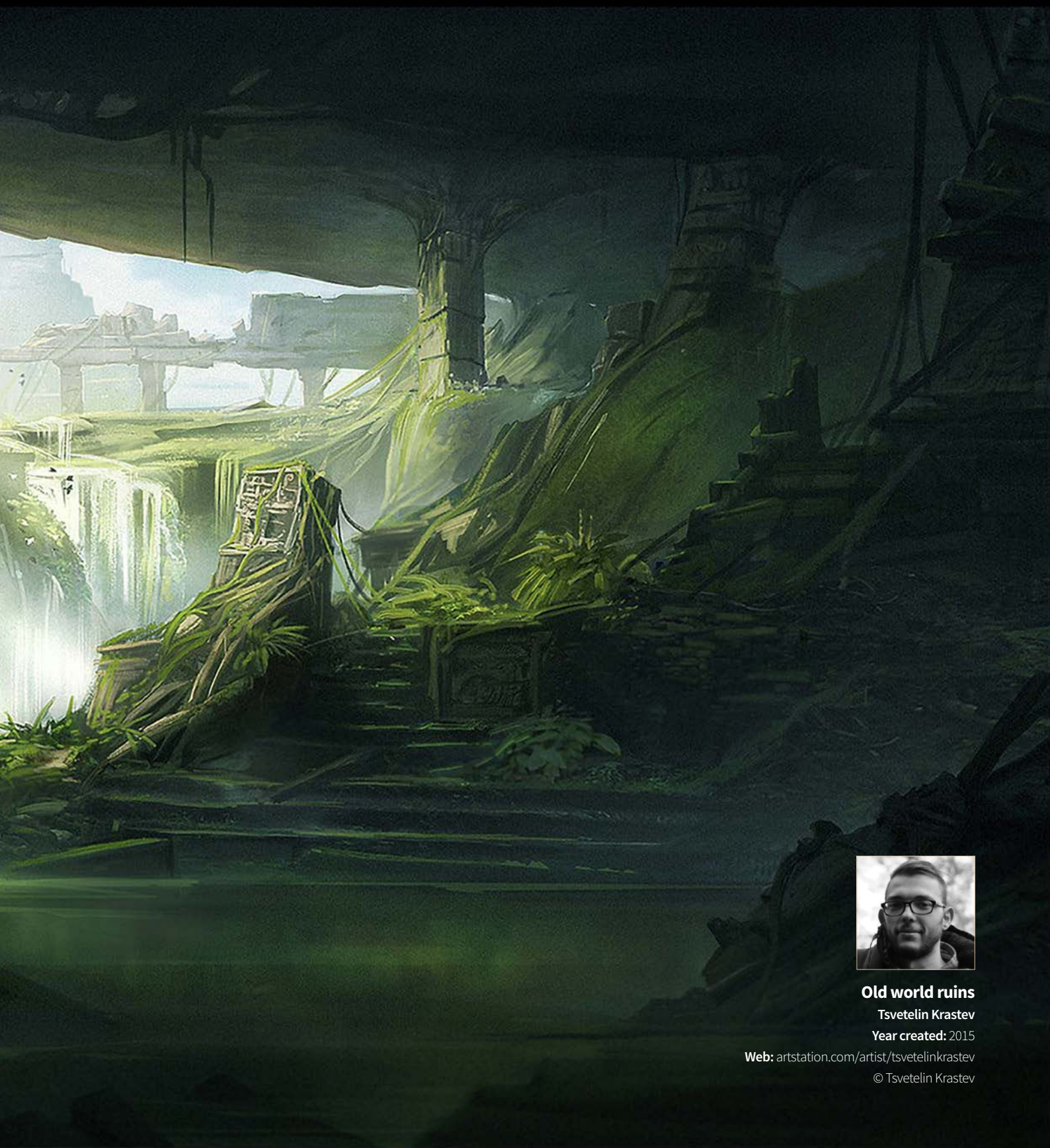






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**Old world ruins**

Tsvetelin Krastev

Year created: 2015

Web: [artstation.com/artist/tsvetelinkrastev](http://artstation.com/artist/tsvetelinkrastev)

© Tsvetelin Krastev





## Back Stabbed

Tyler Thull

Year created: 2016

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Thull 16









### The Approach

Dave Paget

Year created: 2016

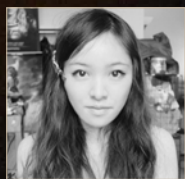
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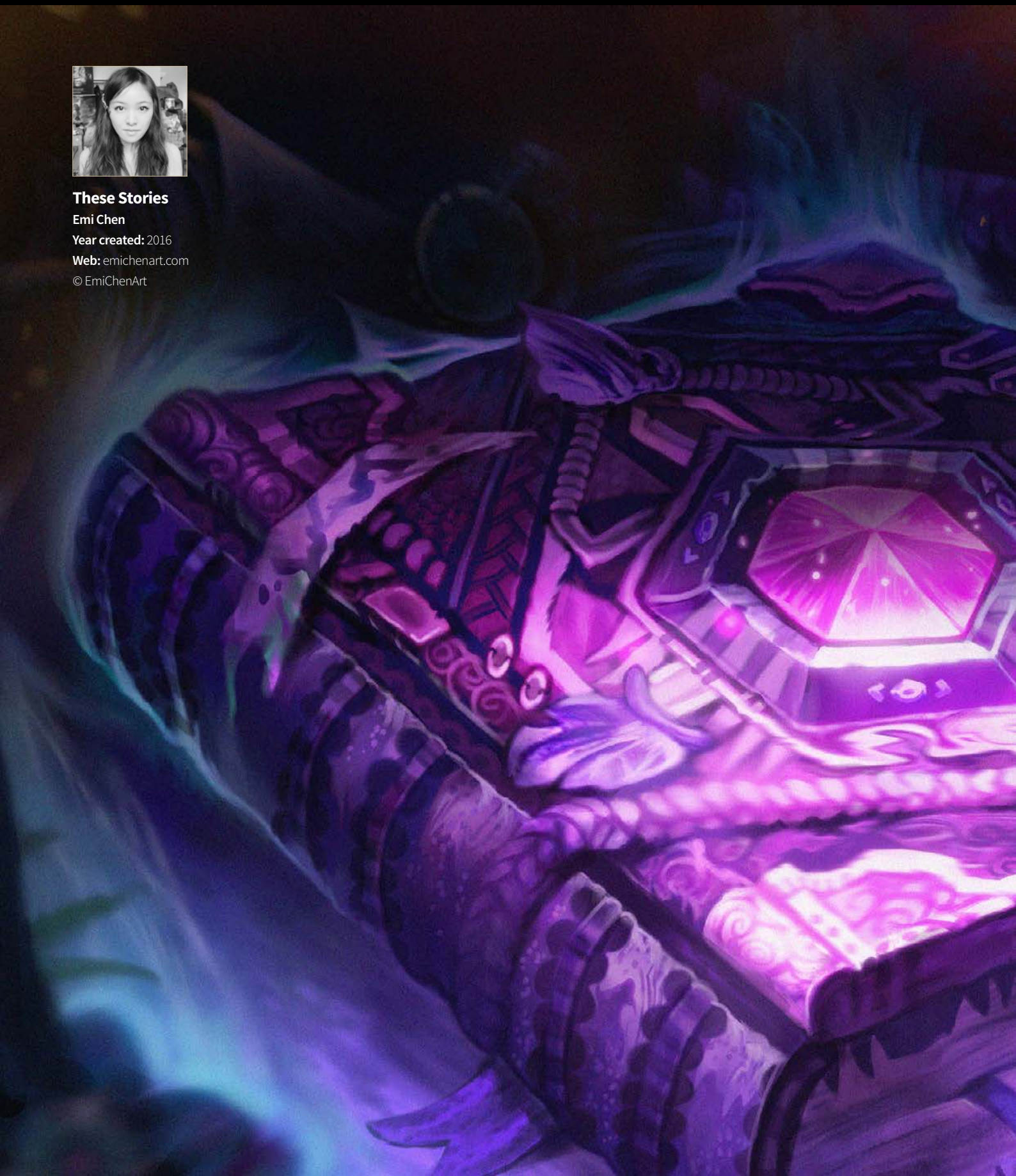
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Emi Chen

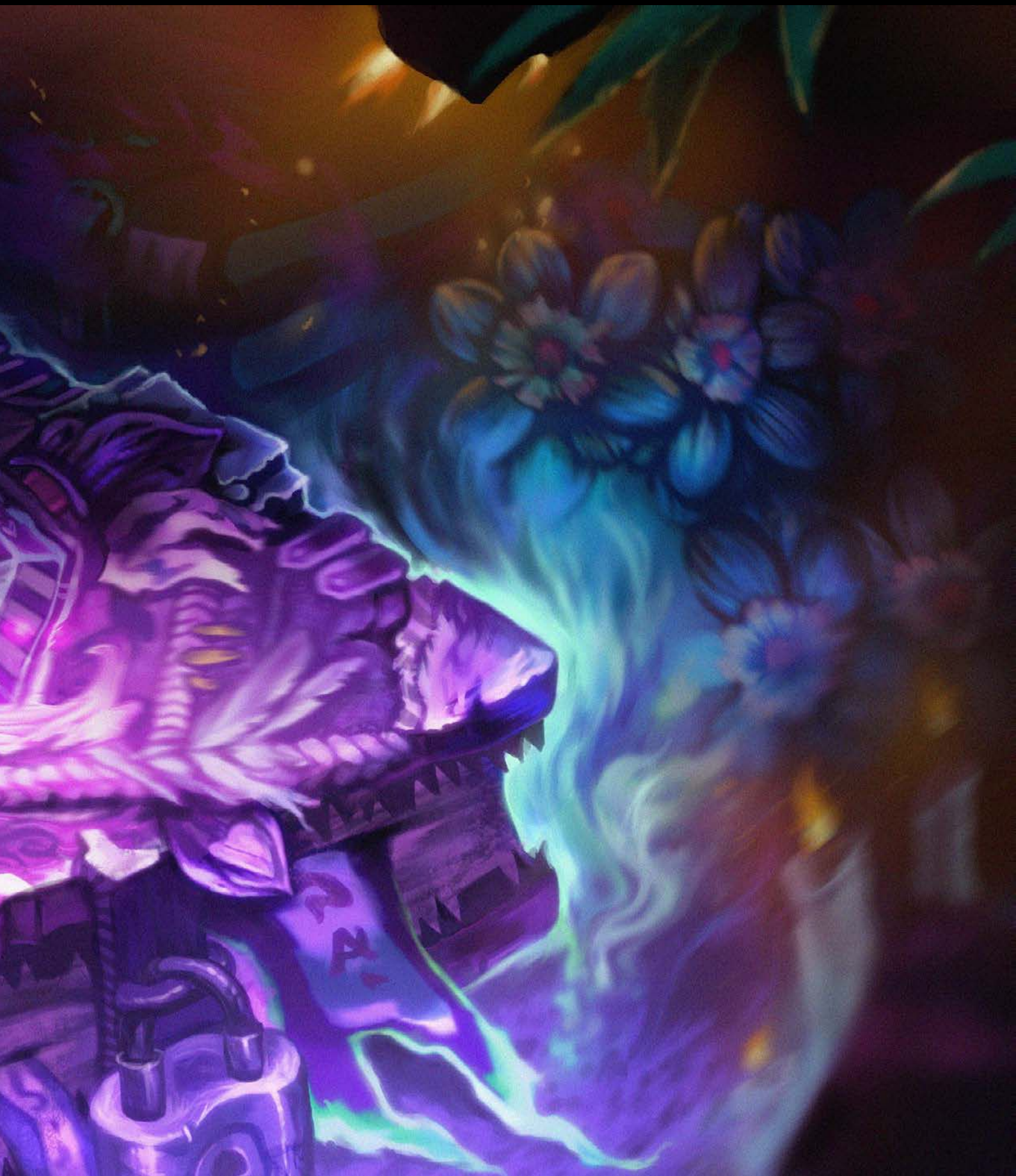
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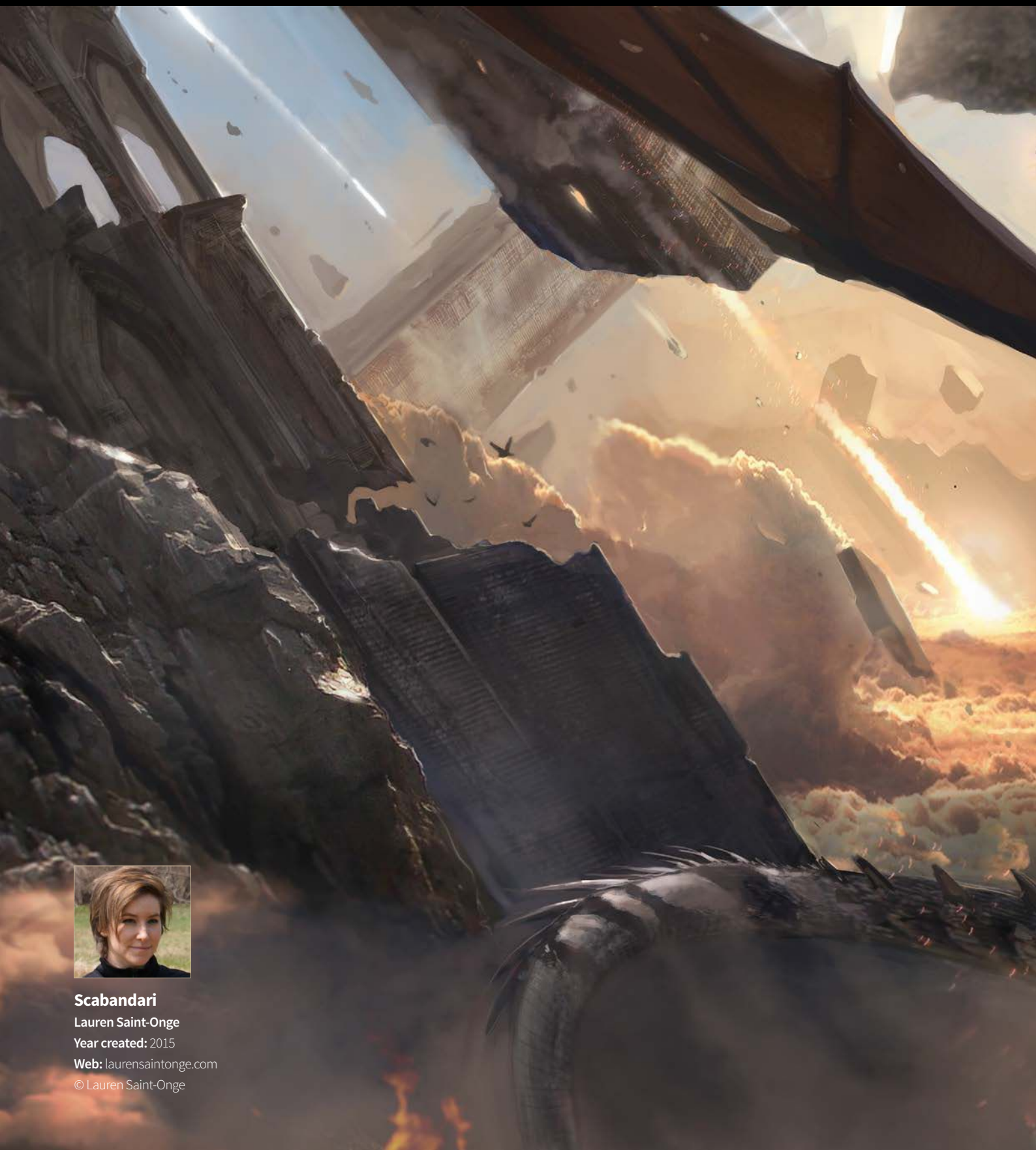
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**Scabandari**

Lauren Saint-Onge

Year created: 2015

Web: [laurensaintonge.com](http://laurensaintonge.com)

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## Transborder 66

Sebastien Hue

Year created: 2016

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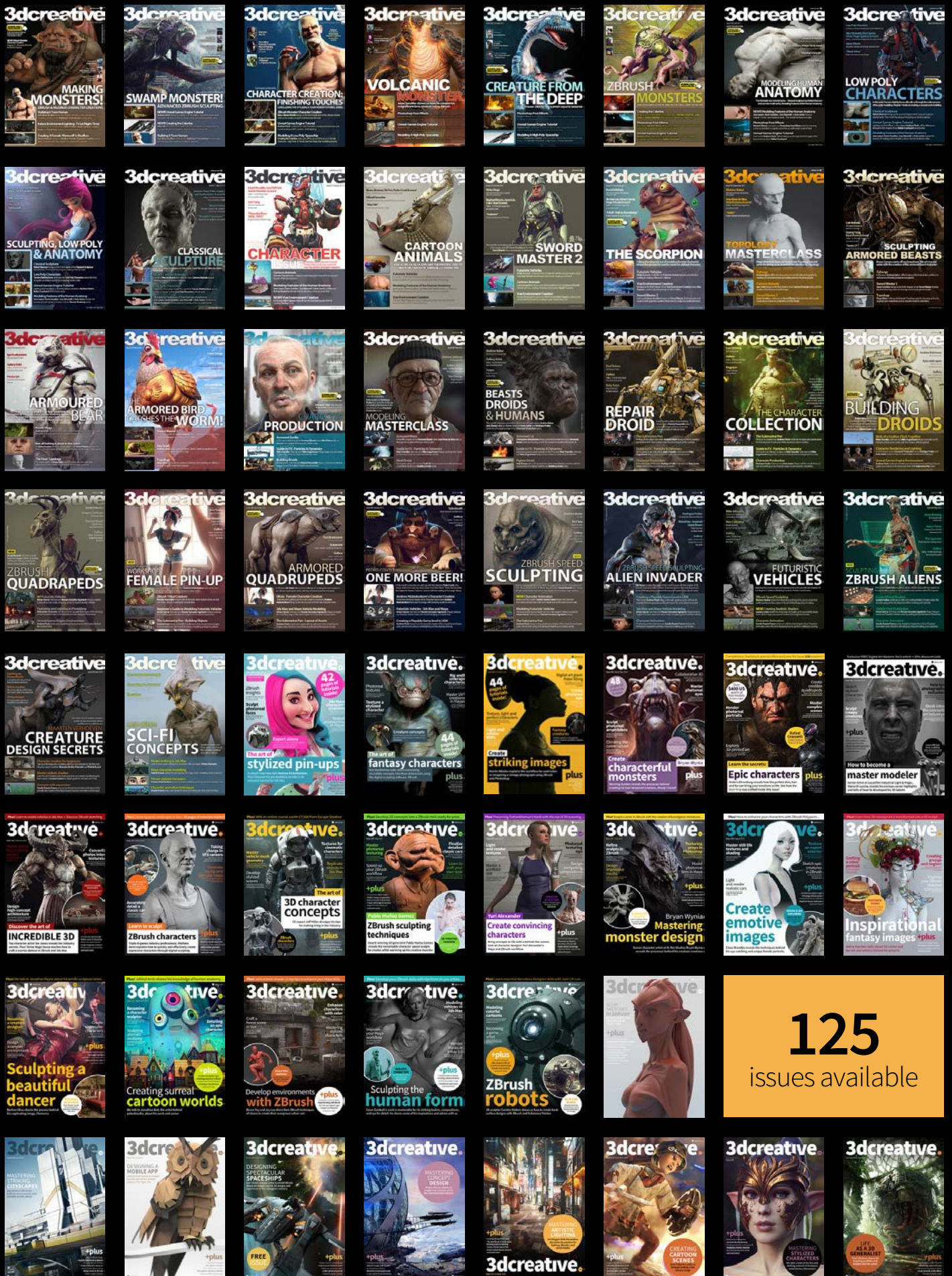


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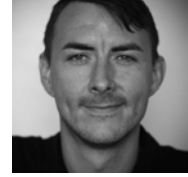




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## The Artist



**Noely Ryan**

[enor.artstation.com](http://enor.artstation.com)

**Software Used:**

Photoshop

Noely Ryan is an artist living and working in Dublin, Ireland. He creates concepts, digital matte paintings and motion graphics for the television and film industry in Ireland.

# Create a fantasy speed painting

Noely Ryan takes you through the process of using your imagination to create a frosty fantasy speed painting [▶](#)

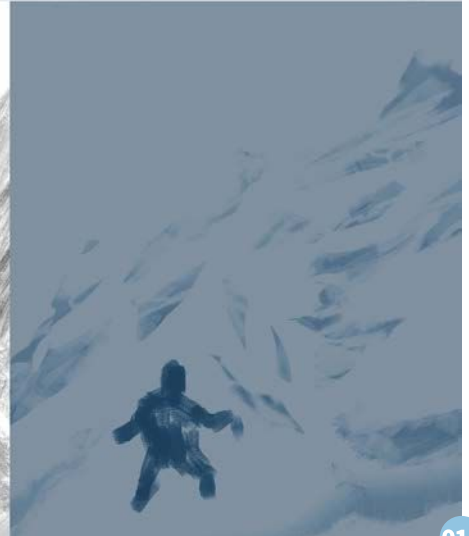




## Find out how to use custom brushes to paint a white fantasy scene...

In this tutorial, I will take you through my process of creating a fantasy themed speed painting, with a loose, painterly style. Usually my first step is to gather reference images to work from; however for this tutorial I think it would be great to create a challenge and use my imagination to complete the piece. With a vague idea in mind, I loosely sketch and compose the image, quickly block in the forms, try to find details I like and enhance them. If you are trying to be fast, and if you can quickly visualize how your character or monster looks just with basic shape and form, you can use the time saved to add the nicer details that define your character.

It's also good to collect custom brushes that you can use in your speed-painting efforts. They can help a lot with getting textures or certain elements of the painting done quickly so you can focus your attention on the more important parts of the image. I have used them here to paint a quick landscape so I could concentrate on the movement and pose of the troll, and the hunter he has in his sights. I have also included the brushes I have used in the files so you can use them too; you can download them with this tutorial.



01a

**01** **Sketching and composition:** The very first thing to do is to sketch some ideas; this helps to work out composition and subject matter. I imagine a confrontation in snow where a hunter encounters a beast he has been hunting. Sketch a couple of different compositions with the beast in the background facing the hunter, who is in the foreground. Frank Frazetta's work is a good source of inspiration for this type of painting because he often painted giants and beasts lunging towards the hero in the foreground in a triangular composition. With this in mind you might find that a portrait orientation will add to the drama of the painting.

To start your sketch, create a new layer by clicking the New Layer button in the Layers panel and fill it with a solid off-white or light-blue color. ▶

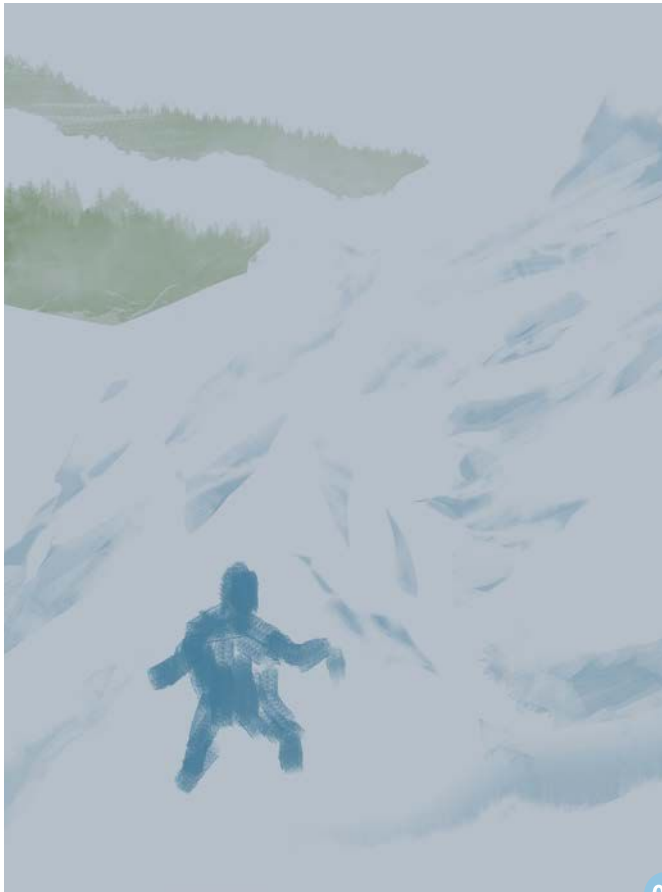
**01a** Quickly sketch out each of your ideas using the Lasso tool and textured brushes

**01b** The Lasso tool is great for selecting random areas to build up the environment



01b





02

To quickly get a snow covered ground use a combination of my textured brushes (Forme échantillonnée 4 2, Round & Bushy, and Debris 1 & 2), the Lasso tool and a soft edged brush. When you are happy with the ground make a new layer and a number of selections holding Shift with the Lasso tool, then lightly paint inside the selections with a light grayish blue hue using a soft edged brush.

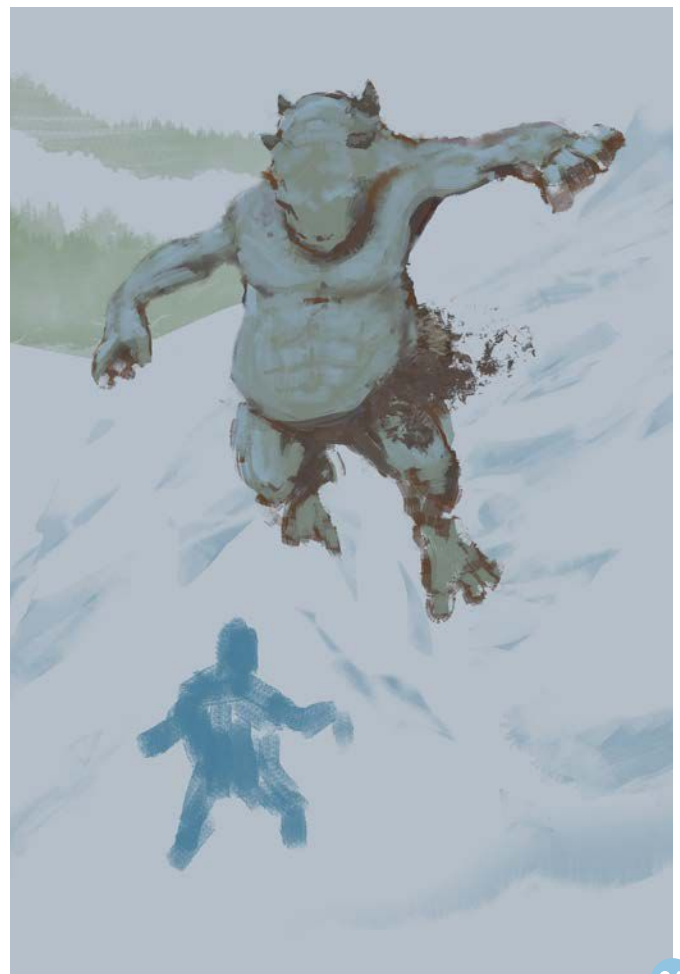
Next, add a mask to the layer (click the New Layer Mask button in the Layers panel) and use textured brushes to mask away details in the snow such as the different layers of snow and the ground beneath it. In a few strokes, and by using custom brushes, you can create a very quick and strong background to work on.

**02 Trees and distance:** I came across a nice brush for trees (FOREST – you can find it in the brush pack). It scatters a stamp of perfectly keyed fir trees with nice details so you can quickly implement horizons and backgrounds into your paintings. Use it, on a new layer, to place trees going straight across the image, and then erase the bottom edges with a hard brush to ground the trees. To create distance and an atmosphere go over the trees very lightly with a soft edged brush and some of the textured brushes. This will give your painting a nice foggy atmosphere at this early stage.

**03 The troll:** Instead of a monster or beast I am going to paint a troll/ogre barging, in a rage, towards the hunter (and the viewer). At this stage you might not have a clear idea what the troll is going to look like but you can make a start by sketching (on a new layer) a heavy human-like figure with exaggerated proportions. Try to imagine a gorilla standing upright – they have short legs and long arms – posed as if he is running downhill towards the hunter. This might be tricky, especially if you're not particularly familiar with gorilla anatomy!



03



04





05

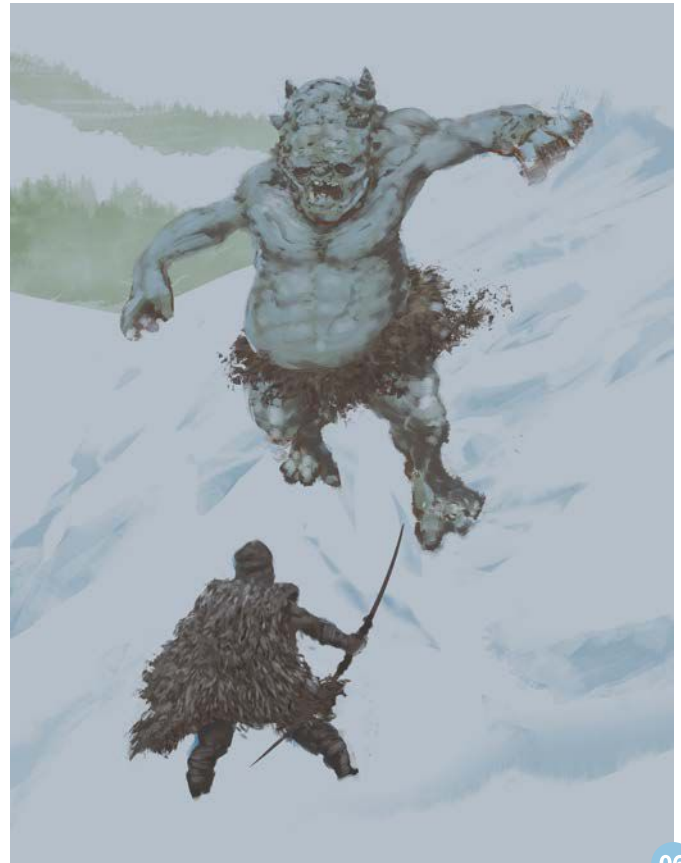
For my sketch, the troll's right leg is taking the most weight and I could easily spend a lot of time correcting it; however I am more concerned with the sense of movement and not anatomy, so we can move on. Fill in the sketch with a pale green for the troll's base skin color; from this base color you can start to brighten and darken some areas to build form and lighting.

**04 Adding form:** To light the troll you can use a rough textured brush (PaintBrush 2 and PaintBrush 3) and sample the light-blue color of the snow with the Eyedropper Tool (I). This acts as the ambient light color that is reflected everywhere by the snow. Alternating between the Brush and Eyedropper Tool by pressing Alt will allow you to quickly sample the nearby color and build the forms of the troll.

Build up layers of the troll's different values while varying the opacity of the brush with the number keys. To help soften a few edges and break p the forms you can sparingly use the Smudge Tool (R). The Lasso tool is great if you need to move parts of the troll around; I moved the troll's right arm to give it better balance and movement as it rushes down the slope. Use a textured brush (Forme échantillonnée 54 1), set to scatter, to roughly paint in a bear-hide garment around the troll's waist. When you are happy with the overall form of the troll you can move on to adding finer details, such as his face.

**05 Growing a face:** Adding details to the troll involves the very same process as the previous step, but with much closer attention to the level of detail. Sample some of the surrounding colors with the dropper tool and begin filling in the facial features – this time you should use stronger values and try adding some different hues here and there to give it depth. For me the troll's face pretty much formed itself as I loosely painted in the highlights and shadows. Set the brush's opacity to 100% and layer the color to build up the forms. Try starting with a human-like facial structure with the eyes and nose, in all the familiar places; with these in place you can experiment with the layout to get different looks by using the Lasso tool. You want to go with a grossly disfigured face with lots of lumps, bumps, scratches and scars.

**06 Hunter's fur:** Now it is time to move on to the hunter; he needs a nice warm bear-skin cloak to keep out the wintry wind. Use the FurScatter brush (included in the brush pack) to paint the fur of the cloak quickly. As he is wearing a huge cloak you don't need to worry too much about the body; just quickly block out his legs, arm and head. With the fur brush – opacity set to 60% – build up the layers of fur on the cloak; keep the color monotone for now, you can add more later on. The brush also has Color Dynamics switched on to give some variation and the effect of layering to the fur. You don't need to



06

do any feet because they will sink into the snow and his hands are in a pair of thick gloves. There isn't really that much detailing for the hunter compared to the troll.

**07 Bringing the sun out:** Now your characters are in place you can add some dramatic lighting to the dull, foggy scene; you will also need to add some elemental effects for the weather. I have a brush (Fine Hair) that works great for hair but it is also really useful for adding wisps of wind as it picks up loose powdered snow from the slope. You can also use this brush as an eraser to go back over the strokes to give good results – the negative space created by using the same texture brush to take away ▶

**02** The brush for these trees came in very handy

**03** Sketch a hulking figure with nice movement in form to start with

**04** The overall shape, pose and forms are done and the troll is ready for details

**05** Start with a human-like face and add lumps and bumps to disfigure it

**06** The fur brush is very effective for getting the hunter painted quickly





07

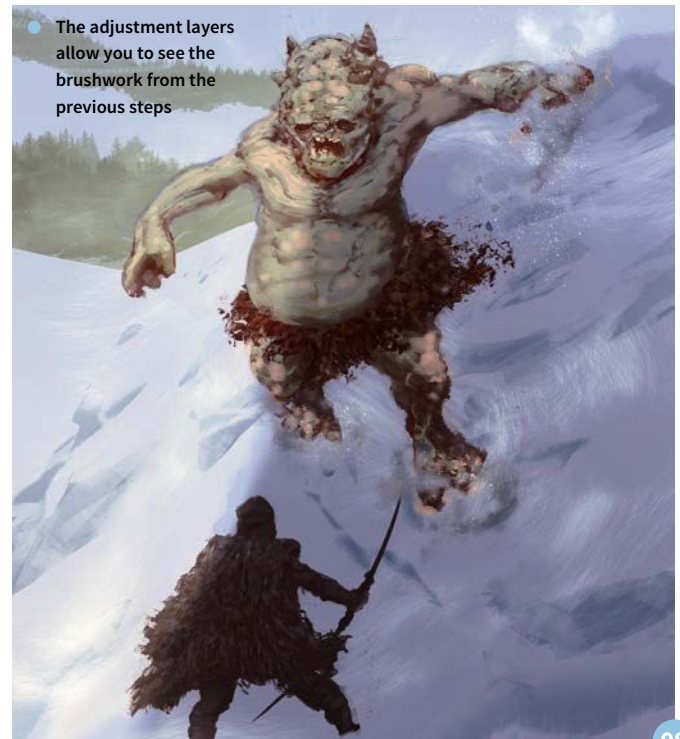
from the paint stroke as you paint, (alternating between the brush and eraser by keeping your finger over the B and E keys) quickly adds variation to the texture which is always a good thing for random wisps of wind. This is true of all textured brushes. To enhance the dynamics of the scene try breaking up the snow where the troll is trundling through.

To create the dramatic light and shade, on a new layer make a large selection going straight down the middle of the layer. Fill the right side with a darker shade sampled from the very darkest patch of snow. Add a Gaussian Blur filter (Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur...) to soften the edges of the selection and set the Blend Mode to Overlay. This will result in a pleasing cold shadow. Next, invert the selection (Select > Inverse) and on a new layer paint a warm yellow color to add the bright sunlight.

**08 Playing with curves:** I find that editing the values of each of the RGB channels in the Curves dialogue (Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Curves...) can yield pretty great visual results. Make a new Curves layer placed above all the other layers and tweak the RGB valves a little to enhance the contrast and give the image a lot more interest and vibrancy. You can also play with the colors with a Color Balance layer. As these adjustment layers are above everything else you have a nicely lit background, however, the troll has become lost in the darkness. To fix this make duplicates of the adjustment layers and clip them onto the troll's layers group. You may need to do some more tweaking to bring out the brush work you made when you first painted the troll.

**09 Pushing the temperature:** Hopefully you are happy with how the painting looks. I particularly like the color of the sun on the troll's right shoulder and chest; however, I feel that this hotspot can be pushed a bit further. Add another Overlay layer and use the same color (from Step 7) to increase the temperature of the sun and the troll's skin. Do the same for the shadows by darkening the shaded areas with a shade of blue to reflect the light coming from the snow.

The composition needs something to balance out the troll's pose. By adding a club to the troll's hand you not only balance the pose but also add a guide



08



09

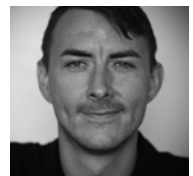
line to the overall composition; it gives the eye something to settle on before continuing on to the hunter in the foreground.

**10 Finishing touches:** The hunter has also become lost in the shade during the previous steps; you can reposition him so he catches some of the sunlight. Make a composite of the hunter's layers and use Liquify (Shift+Ctrl+X) to fix the pose and his stance in the snow. He needs to be appealing but not so much that he distracts from the troll. To add some narrative to the piece you can have the hunter about to draw an arrow to shoot at the charging troll. As you did with the troll, brighten, darken and push the temperatures of areas of the hunter with an Overlay layer. Finally, to finish off the piece and add some atmosphere, use a soft edged brush to lightly dust the area, and with that you are done. ●





## The Artist



**Noely Ryan**

[enor.artstation.com](http://enor.artstation.com)



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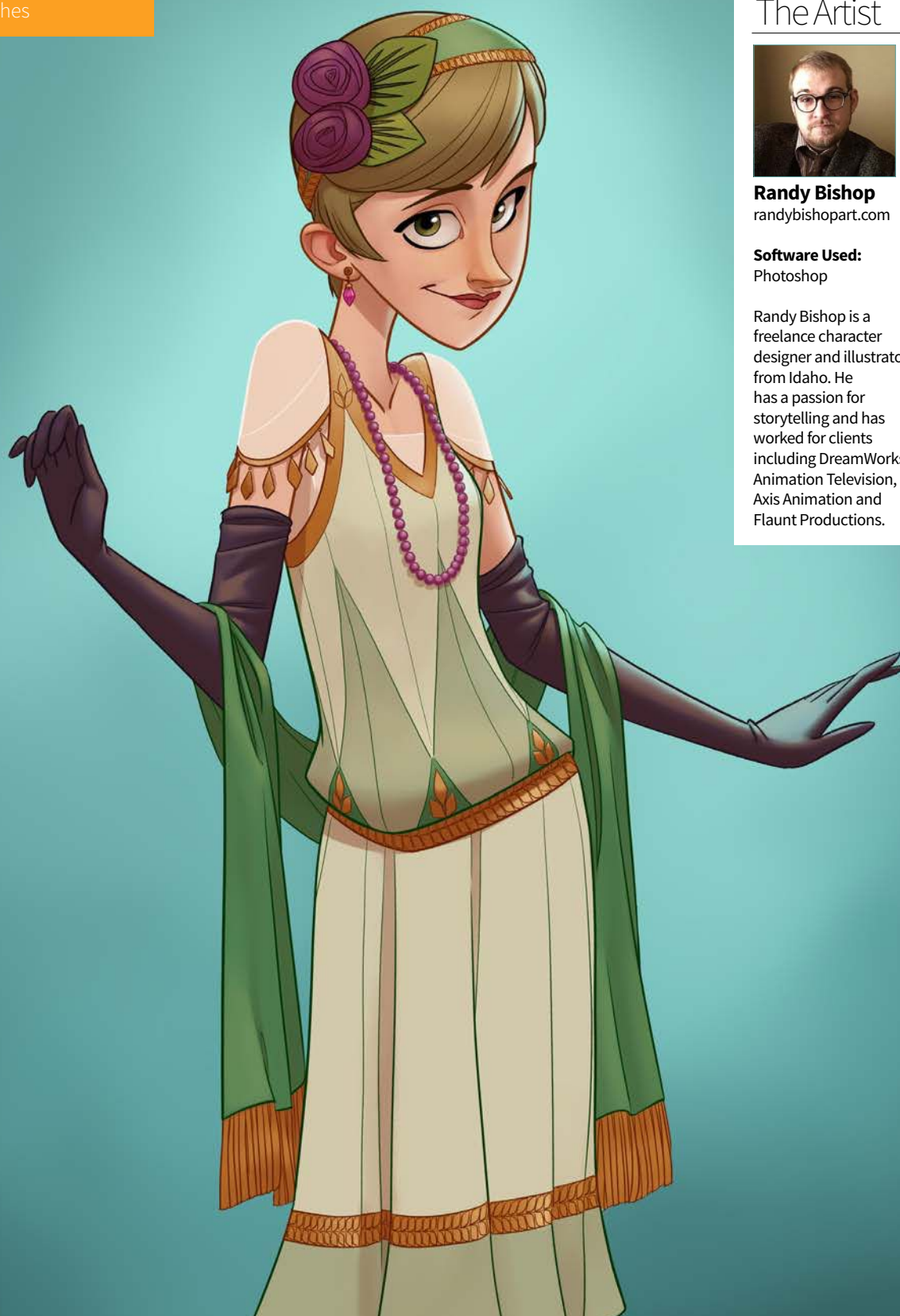






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## The Artist



**Randy Bishop**

[randybishopart.com](http://randybishopart.com)

**Software Used:**

Photoshop

Randy Bishop is a freelance character designer and illustrator from Idaho. He has a passion for storytelling and has worked for clients including DreamWorks Animation Television, Axis Animation and Flaunt Productions.

# Design a 1920s costume

Character designer Randy Bishop demonstrates how to design and paint a stylized character costume [▶](#)



## Learn how Randy uses layer modes to strengthen his work in Photoshop...

In this tutorial, I'm going to take you step by step through my process. Specifically, in this case, the process of designing costume for characters. Costume is an important part of character design and shouldn't be overlooked or done half-heartedly. For every character I design, I try to familiarize myself as much as possible with the relevant fashion and lifestyle of the character's environment. If the character appears in a story that is based in reality, it's important to know the cultural climate that the character lives in.

A big part of costume design is research. It's important to know how clothing is constructed, how different materials drape over the figure, and how to communicate all of that in your artwork. Almost all of my work is done digitally, so for this tutorial I'm going to be using Photoshop. There are a lot of advantages to working digitally and I'm going to try to illustrate a few of them here in this tutorial. This isn't the process I use one-hundred-percent of the time, but it is a process I've found a lot of clients appreciate.

**01 Rough concept sketches:** For this 1920s themed character I have learned a lot from my familiarity with J.C. Leyendecker's work. He was an excellent American illustrator who was working during the 1920s and 30s, and he had an exceptional ability to portray the clothing of the time. Knowing a little bit about 1920s fashion from the get-go, I start to work on costume designs with a few rough sketches. I generally like to have between three and five solid concepts at this stage.

**02 Refining the sketch:** I usually gather a lot of images to use as inspiration for my work and then use different elements from different sources to use in my design. For this design, I draw directly over one of my initial sketches on a new layer to add details that are inspired by my reference images. Using multiple layers is really helpful when designing costuming for a character. I make adjustments to her proportions, and I change aspects of her clothing, adding details to it to keep the viewer's interest a ▶



**01** Roughly sketch between three and five concepts

**02** Refine the sketch by drawing on a new layer over the rough sketch





03

**“It’s also important to put lines down confidently at this stage. If you hesitate as you’re putting a line down, it will show”**

little longer. Once I have a fairly refined sketch, I will move on to drawing clean lines.

**03 Inking clean lines:** When you are inking, it can be hard to maintain the life and integrity of your original sketch. To avoid killing my sketches, I try to ink my pieces as if I’m drawing them for the first time. Not every line I put down lies directly over the sketched line on the layer beneath it. It’s also important to put lines down confidently at this stage. If you hesitate as you’re putting a line down, it will show. If you want really clean lines, you need to put them down like you mean it. For me, it helps to put lines down quickly so that there isn’t as



04

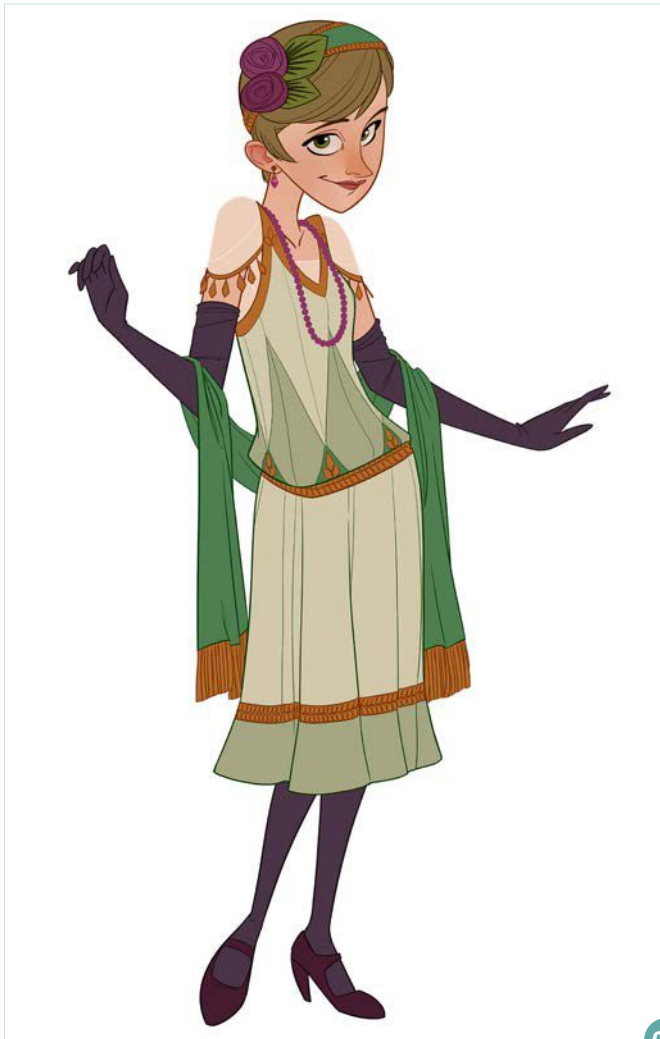
much time for my hand to shake or stray too far from the sketch beneath.

**04 Flat color:** Once I have the line work done, I add a new layer underneath my line work to put color on. At this point I’m only worried about the local color. As a character designer, knowing how the local colors of a design work together without any light hitting them is more important than worrying about the values in a composition. Designing a character is about creating something that’s going to look good regardless of the lighting situation. In this case, I decide that a red-violet, green, and red-orange palette suits the character pretty well and I try to make sure that the values of each color contribute to an overall appealing color scheme.

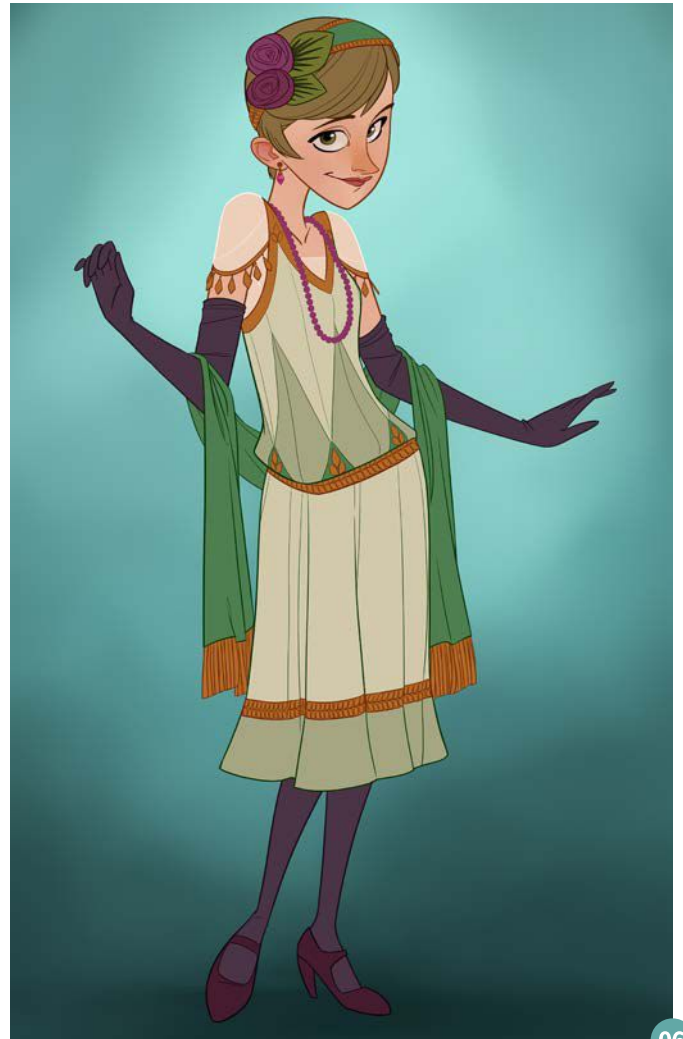
**05 Colored lines:** Once the flat colors are there, I apply colors to the line work to add a little more complexity and appeal to the

design. Black lines are great for many purposes, but in this case, I want things to feel softer and warmer to fit the character. I particularly want the translucent sleeves of her dress to communicate well and I can’t achieve that with a black line. Instead, I achieve this by locking the transparency of the layer that my line work is on by clicking the square checkerboard “Lock transparent pixels” button in the Layer menu, and then simply painting over the lines with the color I want them to be. Locking the transparency on a layer ensures that only the things that are already there can be affected by any changes on that layer.

**06 Background:** I also make sure to indicate a shadow beneath the character to make her feel grounded. To achieve the soft, atmospheric feel in the background, I block the values I want with a heavily textured brush, then use a Gaussian Blur filter to blend the values together (Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur).



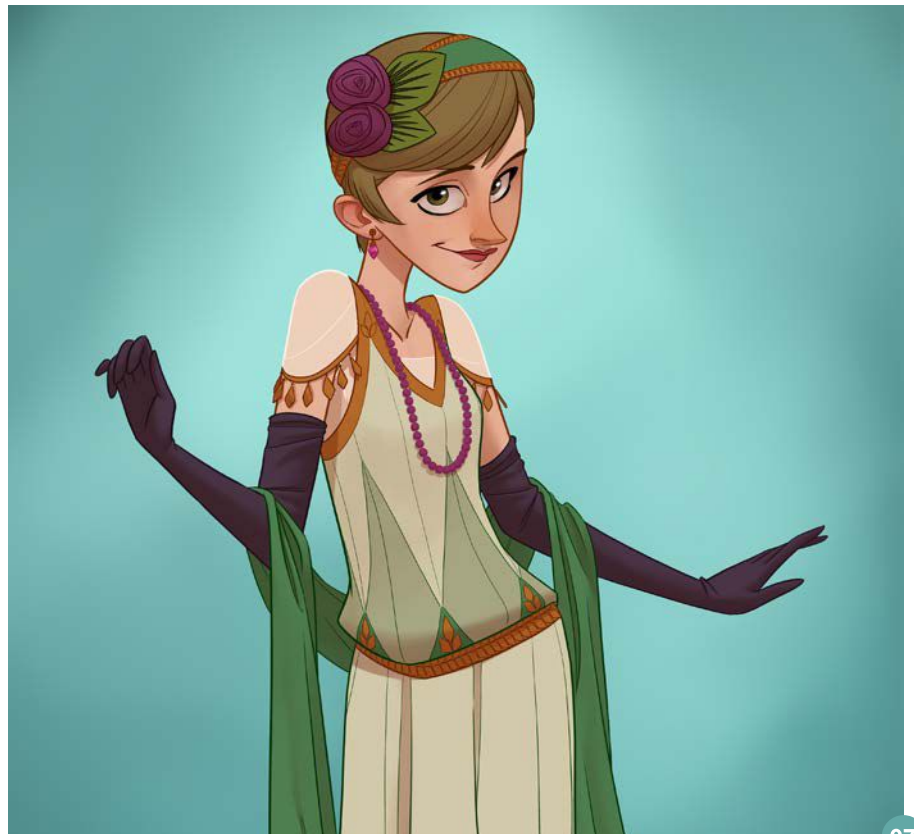
05



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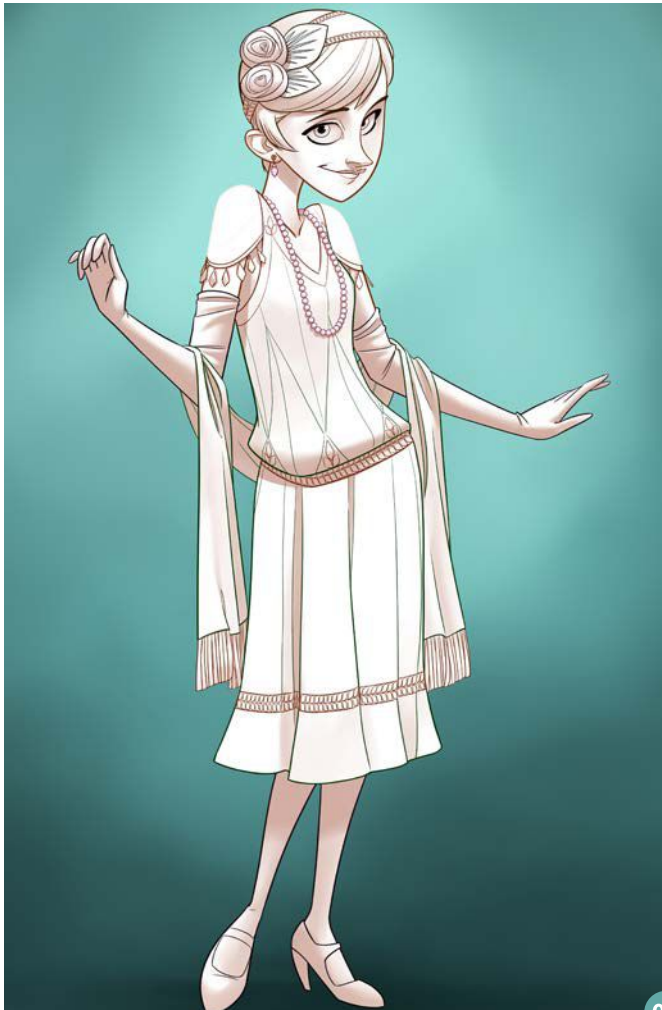
**07** **Shadows:** Once I have the background in place, I move on to indicating values in the character by adding shadows. Photoshop is a great tool for character designers because it offers you tools that can aid you in producing several iterations of a character. If you're going to be doing multiple color combinations of a ►

- 03** Try to preserve the life of your sketch when you're inking
- 04** It's important to learn how to combine colors in appealing ways. Your choice of color says a lot about your character
- 05** Coloring your line work adds another level of complexity to your image
- 06** It's important to choose a background color that compliments your character, but doesn't distract from it
- 07** Keeping your shadows and highlights on a separate layer can streamline the process of making several iterations on one character



07





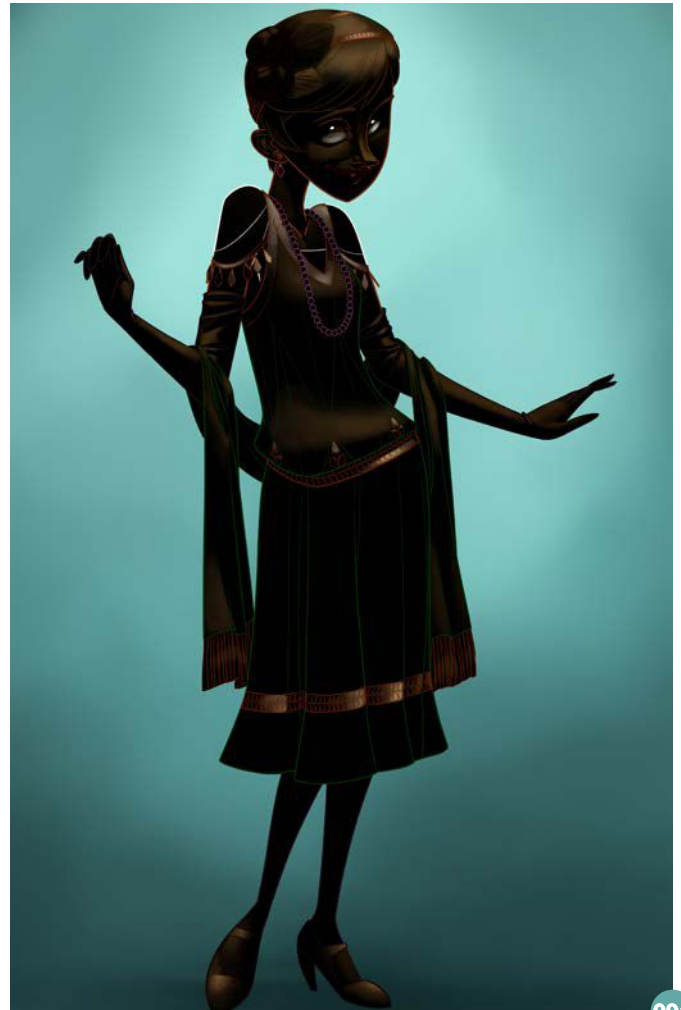
08

character, or if you want to be able to change the local colors on your character easily, it's a good idea to keep your colors, shadows, and highlights on separate layers.

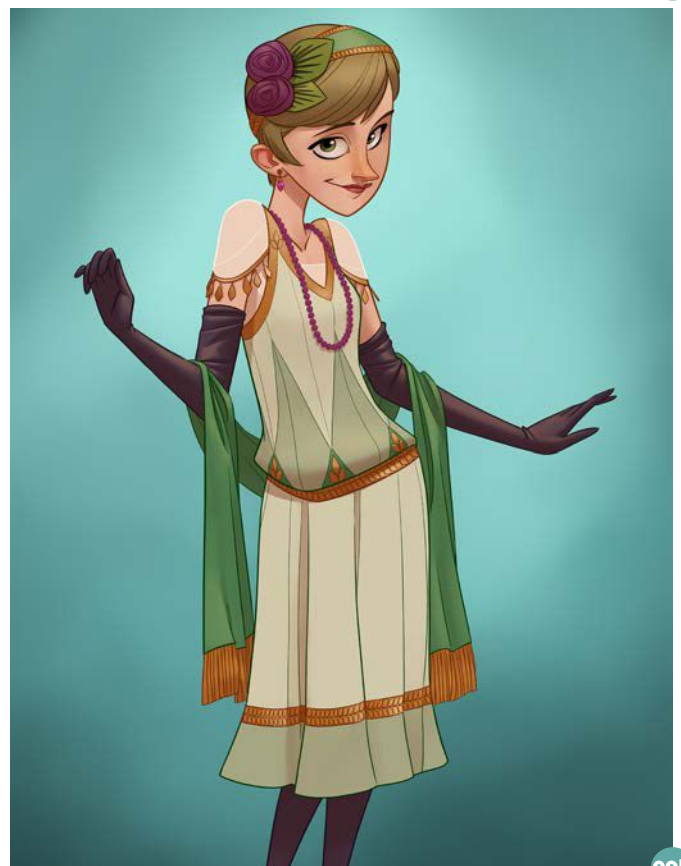
**08 Multiply layer mode:** I love the Multiply layer mode in Photoshop. Multiply allows you to add shadows to a painting easily without having to worry about mixing the colors yourself. The way I use it is to duplicate my color layer so that I have two; one on top of the other. I make sure to lock the transparency of the top layer by clicking the "Lock transparent pixels" button in the layer panel. Once I have done that, I fill the layer with white. The reason for this is that white doesn't show up on a Multiply layer. It also allows me to think entirely about form without being distracted by the values of the colors I'm using.

Once I have the form defined the way I want, I change the layer mode to Multiply, which blends the values and colors into the values and colors on the layers beneath. This way, if I decide to change the color of the character's dress or gloves later, I can simply do it on the color layer without worrying about indicating the forms over again.

**09 Screen layer mode:** After adding the shadows, I want to add a few highlights as well. For this, I use the Screen layer mode. Screen acts like the Multiply layer mode except that instead of darkening the colors beneath it, it lightens them. To do this, I duplicate my color layer again, lock the transparency again, and then fill it with black. Just as white doesn't show up in a Multiply layer, black doesn't show up in a Screen layer. It's hard to paint highlights in an entirely black layer, so before I begin on the highlights, I



09a



09b



10a

change the layer mode to Screen so that I can see what I am doing.

**10** **Rim light:** After I have added the highlights, I want to add a second light source creating a blue-green rim light to tie the character a little more to the background. I use the same Screen layer mode as I did for the highlights, but now I do it on a separate layer because it's easier to edit that way. This also blends the two light sources together just as they would blend together in the real world.



10b

**11** **Final artwork:** After the rim light has been added, I look over the entire image to make sure that everything looks as I want it to. It is always a good idea to review your work once you think it is finished in case any small adjustments are needed. I make a few small adjustments to some of the layers and then decide to call it finished! ●

**08** The Multiply mode allows you to easily blend colors and values

**09a** The Screen layer mode is a useful tool for adding highlights to an image

**09b** The image after shadows and highlights have been added

**10a** Adding a second light source with Screen mode can add even more appeal to your image

**10b** The two light sources blend as they would in the real world





## The Artist



**Randy Bishop**  
[randybishopart.com](http://randybishopart.com)

“These tutorials not only provide interesting exercises for the beginner to help build a strong foundation for drawing and painting, but also provide important insights into the mindset of a concept artist. Very useful and inspiring!”

**Lois Van Baarle** (aka Loish)

Digital concept artist & animator | [loish.net](http://loish.net)

# beginner's guide to digital painting in Photoshop® characters

Following on from the highly successful *Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop*, this latest title explores the popular techniques used in character design.

*Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting: Characters* is a comprehensive guide for artists wishing to create convincing and detailed characters. It features established artists such as Charlie Bowater (concept artist at Atomhawk) and Derek Stenning (freelance concept artist and illustrator, with clients including Marvel Entertainment and Nintendo) who share their industry experiences by covering such aspects as posing characters, choosing the correct costumes, conveying emotions, and creating suitable moods.

Comprehensive step-by-step instructions – plus a quick tips section demonstrating how to paint elements that are integral to character design and a glossary covering essential Photoshop tools – make this an invaluable resource for those looking to learn new skills, as well as those pursuing the next level.





# Concluding sci-fi fundamentals

Juan Novelletto rounds off his series on the fundamentals of creating sci-fi art with these key points to remember ▶





## The Artist



**Juan Novelletto**

[novelletto.com.ar](http://novelletto.com.ar)

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Juan Novelletto is a senior concept artist and illustrator based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He works for NGD studios and is also art director at the indie games studio Nastycloud.



## Key tips for presenting your final work...

Hello and welcome again! In this tutorial we will conclude the concept that we have been working on throughout this series. The aim will be that you accomplish a finished picture, with the correct detail, and also review a little what we have done in the previous tutorials. To all this we will add new content to strengthen the concept, and also to understand exactly for what purpose all of our work has served.

I will also show you how to present everything in a template, so the information is well organized. At the time of displaying your work, for example to a customer or a specialized forum, you will earn a few more points for tidiness. Within this you will be able to present separately some of the elements that made up your scene, particularly those which have more relevance like the characters and the ship. When adding this type of information, we strengthen our image, but in addition, we facilitate the production task.

Remember that the concept stage is a pre-production stage since in the majority of cases, not to say all, our image is delivered to another area, for example to the 3D modeling department, so that they can generate the models that are represented in the image. On the other hand, it is important to show consistency when designing something,

because if we show more than one image we will reinforce all of the design, and that will help us to better convey an idea. All this information will vary according to the area you are targeting with your concept.

**01 Tying the image up:** Before we begin to review everything we did and to detail the different elements, we are going to start with the image that we left in the last tutorial. Although the image was quite close to completion, I will give it a few small adjustments. I start with something that serves to tie the entire image together, and this is the Photoshop filter Paint Daubs. I mask the character and invert the selection, to apply the filter and in this way the details are a little lost, leaving the closest character to the camera well detailed. With this, the goal is that this information in the image is distributed in a balanced way (this was shown with more depth in the first tutorial about composition). Remember that if the information is the same in the entire image it becomes boring; on the other hand, if there is more detail in an area, the eye tends to settle first in that area.

**02 Add some FX:** Although the image is almost finished, you can always add a couple more effects to reinforce the concept. In this case I would add some smoke, fire and particles. With this I get something very valuable, as well as the dramatic effect of chromatic variety.

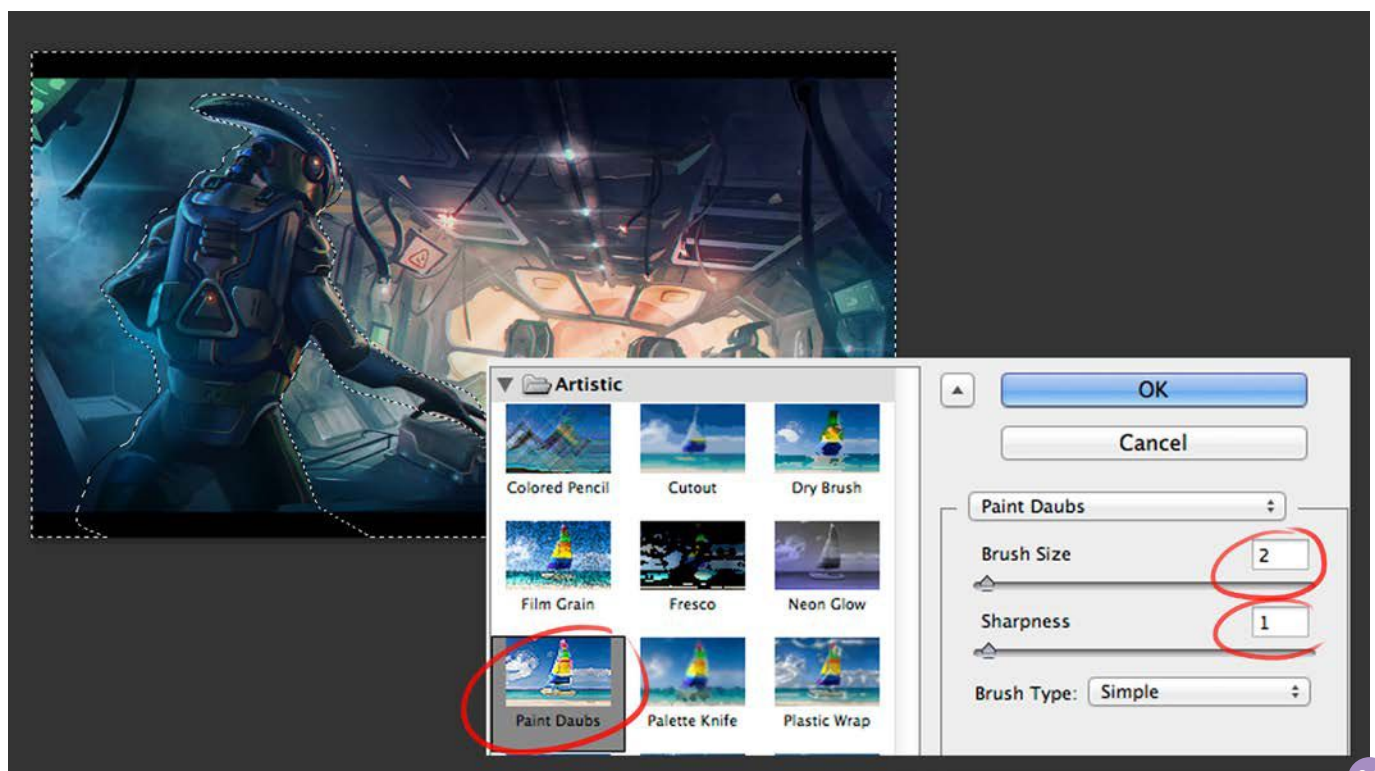
Sometimes when we have a monochromatic image, it's better to add small elements (lights for

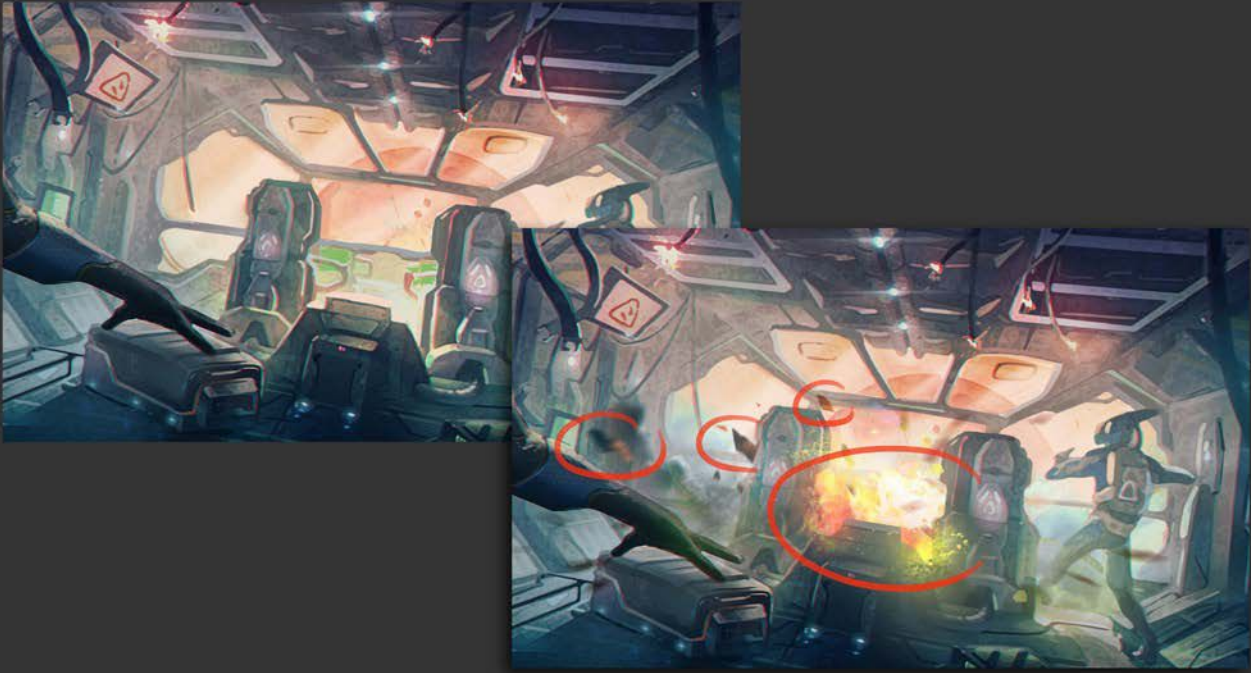
**“For the smoke and fire I use brushes with textures so they are more realistic, and for both effects use layers with Darken and Lighten blend mode”**

example), with well-contrasted colors, to break the monotony. If you recall this same approach was seen in the first tutorial.

For the smoke and fire I use brushes with textures so they are more realistic, and for both effects use layers with Darken and Lighten blend mode. For particles, I mask small shapes with the Lasso tool, and paint with a hard brush. This is not in any way something precise, but rather chaotic. Finally I add a Radial blur. You can use photo textures or shapes, whatever you want; the important thing is to generate some noise.

**03 Adjust colors:** Following with adjustments in the image, I will use a few tricks so we can improve on the color, since there is too much white in the image and a predominance of cold colors. What I'm going to do is use an adjustment layer as we did in the previous tutorials. I recommend that you observe the image like a thumbnail, to have a better judgment of the entire composition. I add the adjustment layer Gradient Map, and choose two colors: one cold and one warm. I put the Gradient Map in the Overlay blend mode, so it abruptly dyes colors and also gives more contrast to the image. In this way, the white gets more orange.





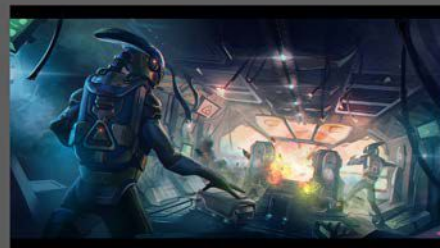
02

However the whole image is dyed and is not the effect we want. Then we lower the opacity of this layer, and also paint the Gradient Map mask. With a soft brush, and a black color selected (which works as a delete in the mask) I paint the areas that are further from the window of the ship. This means the ones that are closest to the camera are not affected by the Gradient Map. In this way, we now have a more predominant contrast in the whole image.

**04 Change the framing:** Another adjustment we are going to do is to change the framing. As I worked on the image, the idea of the accident on the ship was strengthening, and generating more drama.

To continue with this idea, I am changing the angle of the frame just a bit. This is not something complicated and I recommend that you do it, since it is the great advantage of the digital medium, that we can make these adjustments in a short time and spend almost no resources. ►

- 01** Use the filters subtly, and remember that once applied, the information is lost
- 02** The image gains life and realism when you add very simple effects like fire, smoke and particles
- 03** The steps to get two predominant colors in the whole scene



NORMAL IMAGE



GRADIENT MAP

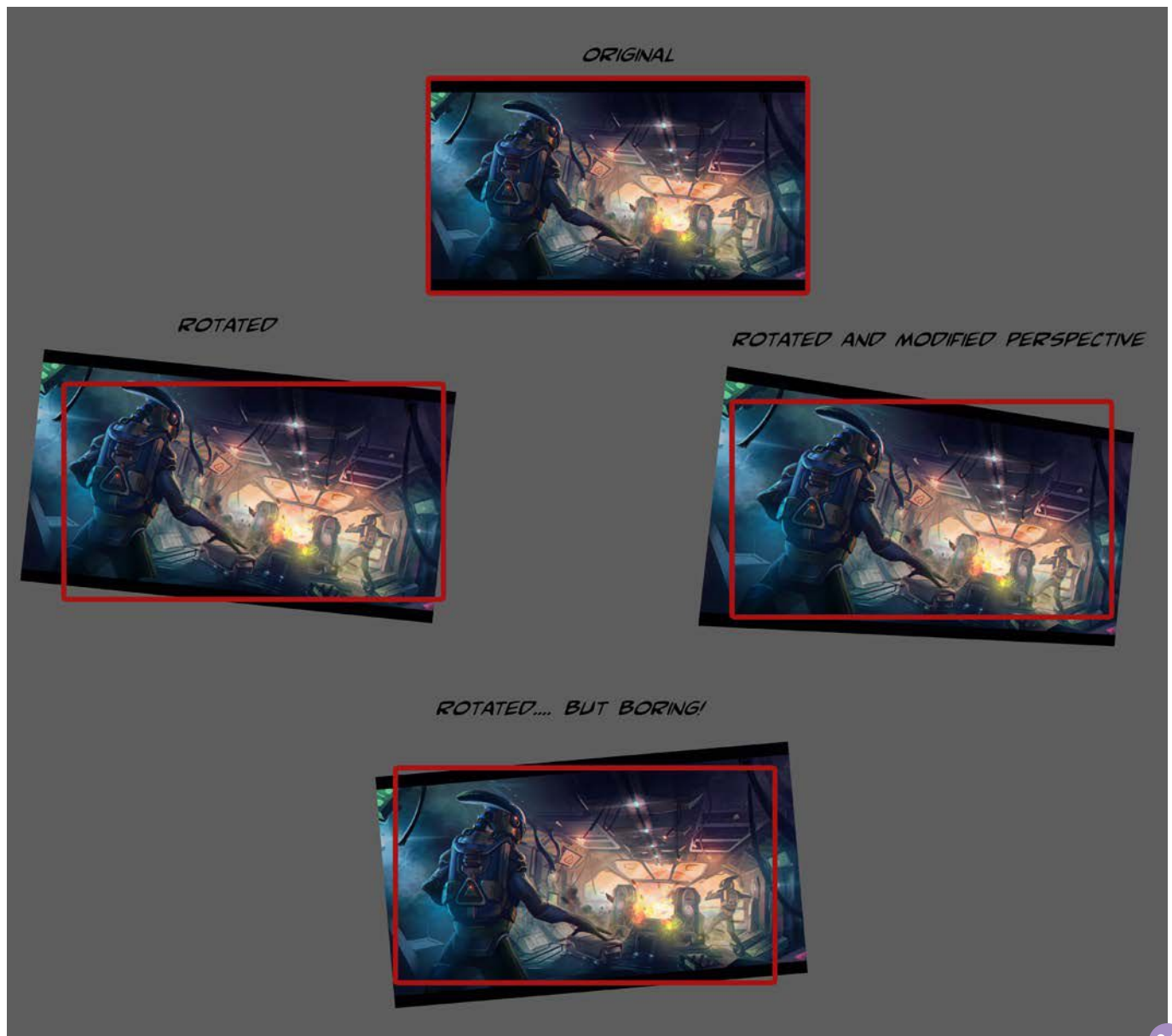
GRADIENT MAP WITH OVERLAY  
(AND 38% OPACITY)

PAINTED MASK!



03





04

I first try to rotate the entire image; if we break the line of the horizon we generate dynamism and our ship, falling and on fire, needs some dynamism! The more horizontal our horizon is in our image, the more static the composition will tend to be. So, with the Transform Perspective option, I exaggerate the perspective on the side of the nearest character; this way he gains even more prominence. This must not be done in a very exaggerated way since the image may deform too much.

**05 Final details:** It is time for the final touches to the concept. The time to make these touches will depend on what you are doing. Within the world of the concept, we can find a great variety, for example; key frame art, or level design that needs some art, or a design of a character, or even promotional art. In general our customer will give references for the level of rendering that will be required in the

image. My experience in the industry has taught me that it should always be established from the outset how long a picture is going to take. Mostly because our time is part of our work, and the more we use on an image, the more expensive it will be.

In this case, we are ready for the details. The scene is well understood, the colors are set, and the character that has relevance has sufficient detail. I add small strokes, to reinforce the blast and some details like things in the foreground. These are simple spots and I blur them, to generate a realist effect with less effort.

**06 Reinforce the story:** Although this tutorial is about generating a sci-fi concept, I think it is interesting at the time of presenting an idea, to reinforce it with more images. One of the most interesting aspects for me is storytelling, because an image may

be technically perfect, but if it does not tell us something, if it doesn't make the viewer think or wonder that happens, it becomes a boring image and goes unnoticed.

In the first tutorial we focused on learning about composition – the various elements on the canvas, focal points, and so on – but also on the storytelling; how give weight or more importance to one element or another. ►

**04 You can see how boring the composition is if we align the image horizontally!**

**05 The level of detail will depend on what you are doing and the image's purpose**

**06 Integrate the colors and the tiny differences between both images to aid the storytelling**



05



THEN...



06

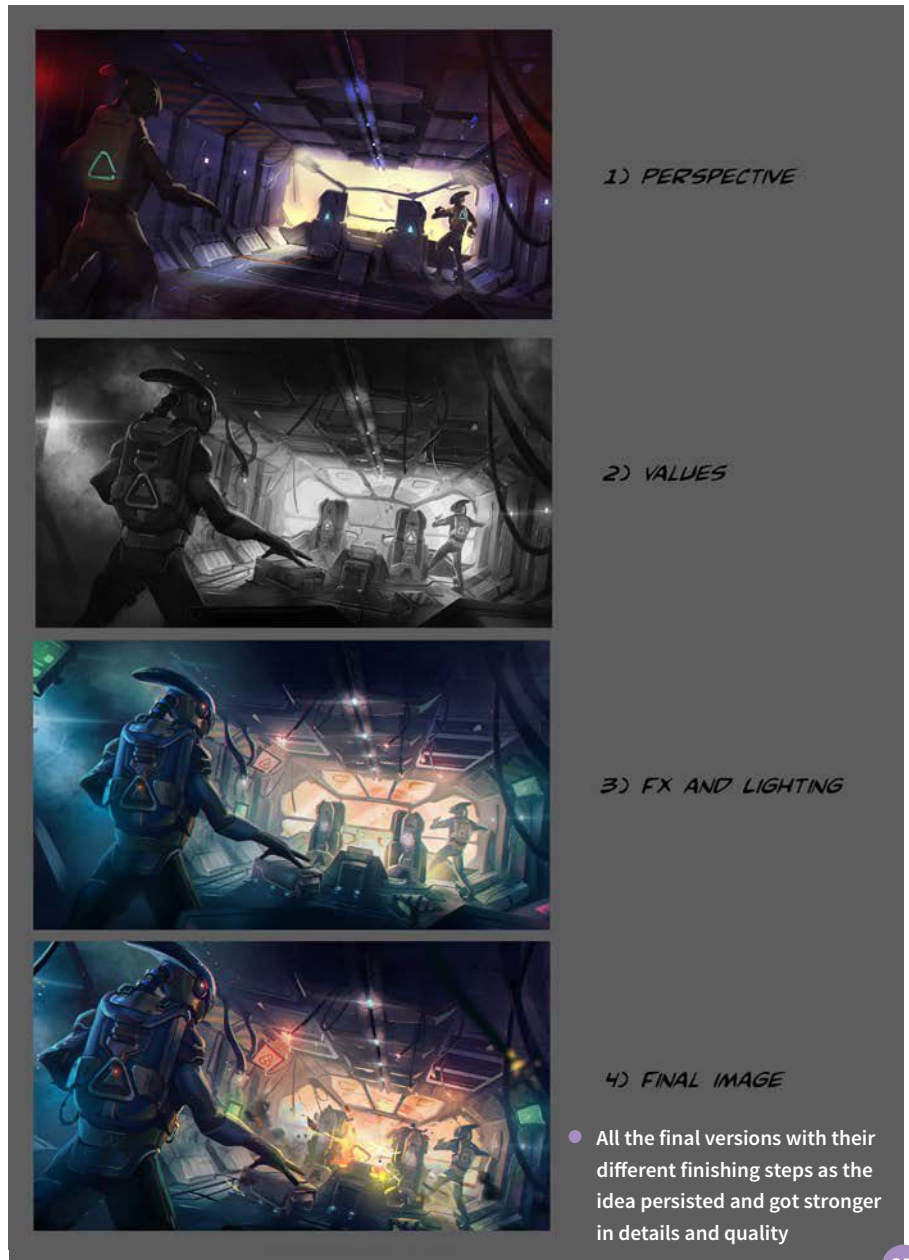


The first image I generated is a good contribution to the last piece of art, since it reinforces the concept even more. Also, if we were working for a client, sometimes they may ask for more than one concept of an idea, which is why I think it is important not to create very detailed or long renders. Rather, create rough sketches of more shots or angles, or later scenes of your concept.

**07** **Review of what's been seen:** In addition to the tutorial on composition that I mentioned in the previous step, we also covered other topics in the previous tutorials: perspective, values, FX and lighting. In perspective we learned to work with the angle of the camera and where to position it for impact. Also we saw how to use 3D software (SketchUp) to accelerate our creative process and production, since it allowed us to generate thumbnails faster to choose the best shot.

In values, we forget about color and applied detail throughout the image, thinking only in terms of the luminosity value of the image, and thereby generating clear values to focus points. In FX and lighting, we colorized the image again with a few Photoshop tricks to make it efficient and fast, and also added many more elements to the image to generate new light bulbs and play with the rebounds of light on different materials.

Finally, in the current tutorial, we adjusted the colors and added a couple of effects that would reinforce the concept, in addition to changing the framing of the whole scene. In the following steps we will work separately with our character, and the ship, in a fast way, so that we can present them next to the final image and achieve a unity that reinforces all the main ideas, with lots of information and details!



07

- Step by step we are getting a different view of our character that will reinforce the concept



08

- The ship from start to end with a recognizable silhouette and patterns repeated from the character's helmet



09



- The final presentation with all that's been completed in this last tutorial

10

**08 Character:** As I said before, the more information we add to our concept, the better we will sell and reinforce the idea. In this case, since the character has a relevant place in the image I'll make a sketch of the character from the front view as it is interesting to have key elements detailed separately.

I start by making a simple sketch, with a hard brush line. As a reference I always use the image that I created before. Then I fill this line art with a flat color and a layer in Overlay mode, and using black and white (and a soft brush), I add lights and shadows. Then, I mask parts of the character and change the values and color using Color Balance, to have the base colors and values of the character. With a semi opaque brush I give a bit of volume to parts with different colors and values. I finally start to briefly detail the character, and with a backlight and shadow I make the forms stand out better.

**09 Ship:** Continuing with the previous point, in this case I am also going to work

on the ship separately. The ship does not have many references other than the interior and the destroyed remains appearing in the first tutorial. But if you remember in the previous tutorials, one of the things I said to make the image consistent was repeating patterns of design with forms.

In this case, since everything has a cartoon tone, I'll make the ship in that style, but in addition, I am going to repeat colors and shapes, like the pointy helmet that the character has. I start in the same way as I did with the character, beginning with the line, along with a fill color base.

With a soft brush I paint a few lights, and counter lights, since metal reflects more light. Next, I accentuate the lights with Overlay and add values and colors to different materials, such as the window and turbines.

Finally, I add details such as weathering, to create realism with very few details. With another layer in Color Dodge, I illuminate the turbine and the lights of the ship.

**10 Final presentation:** We now get to the last step of this series of tutorials. We have our final image; we have our character and ship to display separately. It is time to gather everything into a nice template to present the information together.

This example gives a little taste of each one of the major elements, and while it is not one-hundred-percent necessary to make a template in this way, it is a neat way to present an idea rather than just a loose image.

Showing that one is able to do more than one image of the same idea is something very valuable since it demonstrates the ability to coherently sustain a theme. In this case, I also add information of the scale, to help the client understand the dimensions of the scene more.

At the end, I add a few titles and painted textures to give you a bit of a design element. I hope that you've had fun as much as I did and that we can meet in a future tutorial. See you around! •







## The Artist



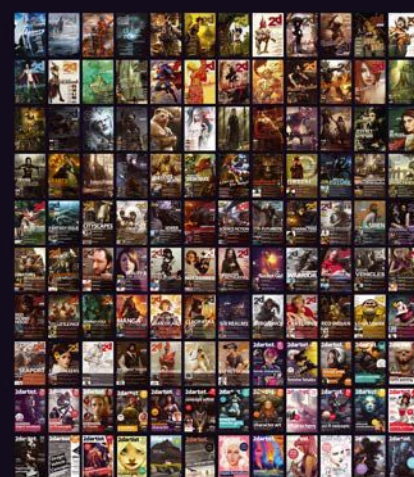
**Juan Novelletto**  
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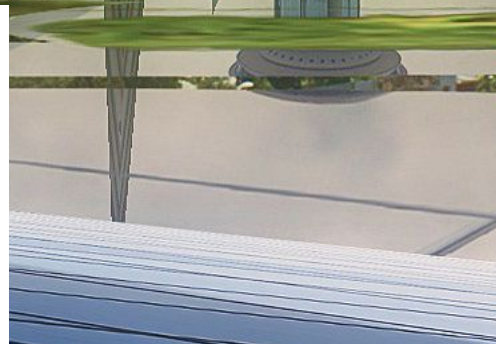
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# Create a futuristic glass city

Marcin Rubinkowski demonstrates how to warp and manipulate photographs into a light filled futuristic cityscape [▶](#)





## The Artist

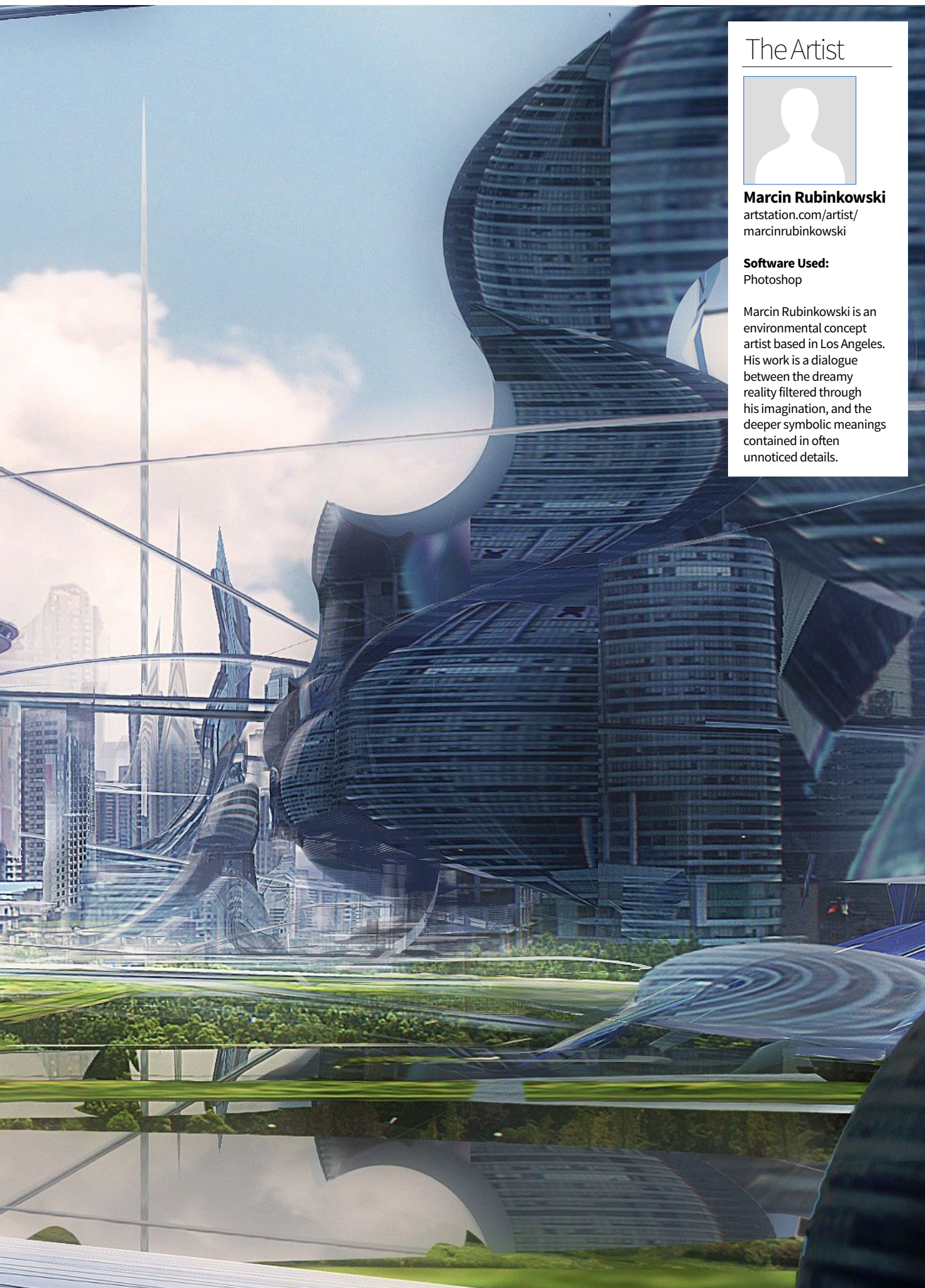


### **Marcin Rubinkowski**

[artstation.com/artist/marcinrubinkowski](http://artstation.com/artist/marcinrubinkowski)

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Marcin Rubinkowski is an environmental concept artist based in Los Angeles. His work is a dialogue between the dreamy reality filtered through his imagination, and the deeper symbolic meanings contained in often unnoticed details.





## Pick up tips on how to quickly alter an image...

The brief for this piece is to create a futuristic glass city with light beams and reflections – sounds awesome right? As you already know the brief, I can tell you that we will be using some “wow” factors and also some cheap time-saving tricks.

There should be a nice curve of attractions in the image, so try to stay focused and pay attention to your composition and the fundamentals of concept art. Do not trust your brain too much and simply check your compositions by flipping the canvas horizontally or zooming out to thumbnail size. You can also limit your color range to black and white, to see how your values are working on each stage of your workflow.

This will be more of a photo-bashing tutorial so it will be good to have some sort of order to the layers. The idea here is that you don't lose too much time trying to make your layers grouped and perfect; rather we must keep our minds excited and not get lost somewhere in the layer tree.

The same applies to cutting and edges. The time for perfectionism will be near the end of the artistic workflow when we will be spending hours polishing and setting the last finishing details.

Most of the time, try to have a fresh mind, think more conceptually and have fun with it! Fun is always the first essential in creating



a wow factor. Whatever you are doing think about composition and the fundamentals!

**01 The right base photo:** In the beginning we must prepare the background for our actions. We are using a photo to speed up our start a little. All we need is a photo of some nice looking modern cityscape with noon global lighting. If it has some little plant areas or small green parks too that would be awesome.

You can choose to use your own photo or take one from [freetextures.3dtotal.com](https://www.freetextures.com). Try to choose wisely with mid-day ambient lights, a nice horizon set, and do not use panorama materials or stuff with deep shadows. We are seeking only to find a proper background for our actions; this is not a “best cityscape” photo contest.

**02 Cleaning and ratio fix:** After you have gone over thousands and thousands of cityscape photos you have your start-up photo. Now you must crop your picture to a wide shot view, which is best for landscapes. Remember, you can make your canvas bigger and rebuild the rest of the shot with the Clone Stamp tool.

At this stage you don't have to be very precise but don't mess with the image too much. Also, clean up stuff like the crane on top of one of the buildings in my piece, or any other aspects which do not fit the idea of glass cities. We only need clean objects that are easy to edit by using the methods we're going to look at.

**03 Warm the sky:** Before we go any further, we will refresh our knowledge about





03a

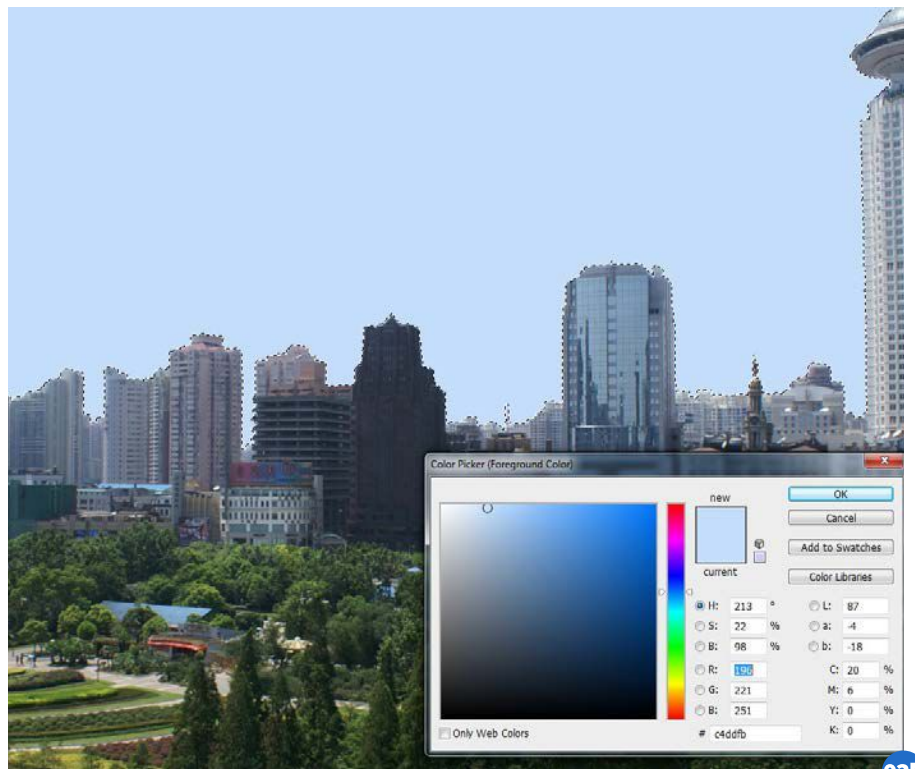
## PRO TIPS

### Use photographs

Photos speed up the process and there is no shame in using them. However, you cannot let them rule your picture totally. At the end of the day your drawing and imagination are essential to the outcome, but why not get a little help from photos?

### Experiment!

In concept art jobs, high quality and clean pictures will not be quite as important as an awesome and fresh design. So do not be afraid to explore your own freaky ways of editing content that distort and make weird effects. So long as they show your idea and do the job of communicating your message.



03b

using the Selection tools on the sky. We will be using the Selection tools (Lasso, Quick Selection and others) on the sky all the time for this glass city project. Remember that using Alt, Ctrl or Shift is key to ruling them all by cutting and adding to your selections.

I am only using Quick Mask (at the bottom of the Layers panel) to check the selection area, not to paint the mask. Another cool thing is that Ctrl+Z (Undo) also works with selection tools. Select

all the sky from your picture, make new layer (Ctrl+Shift+N) and fill the Paint Bucket tool with the same color that dominates the sky in the original photo. That is all we have to do for now. Later we will use this layer to clip in some clouds.

**04 Basic fun:** Use the Selection tools on some of the buildings. Make sure your Quick Selection tool is sampled from all layers, and use (Ctrl+Shift+C) to copy all visible content then hit Ctrl+V to paste it flattened on a new layer. ▶

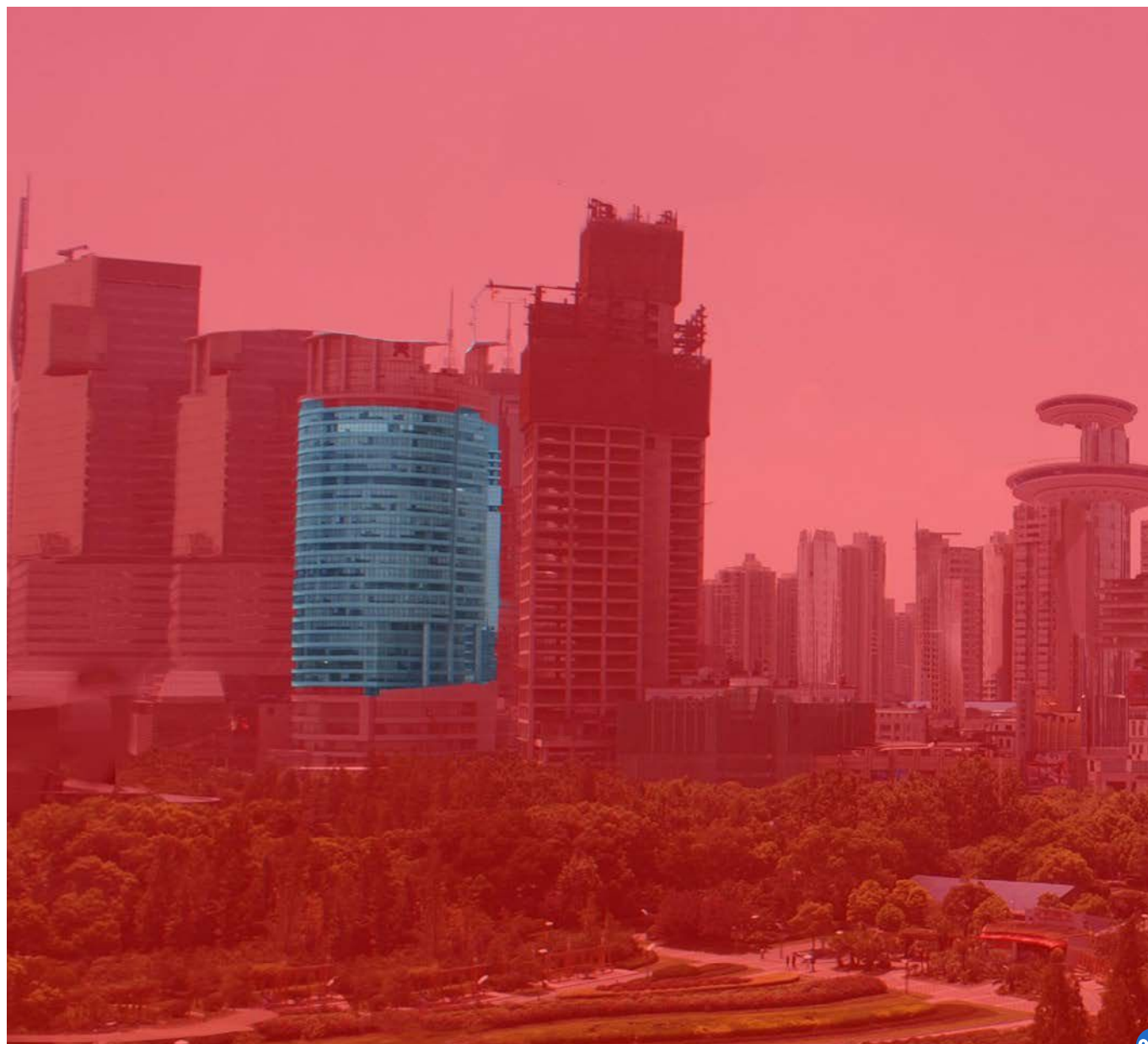
**01** Select a background photo with global lighting and a pleasing horizon

**02** Crop and resize your image using the Clone Stamp tool, then clean the image

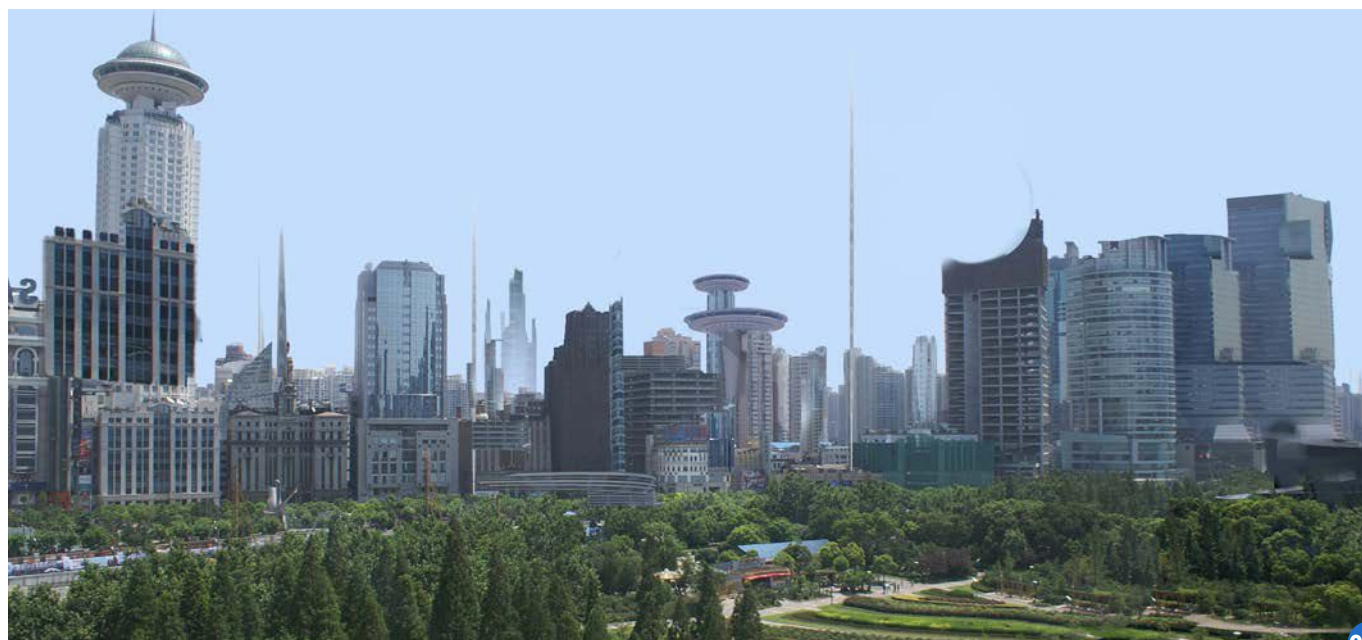
**03a** Use Quick Mask to check the sky area you have selected

**03b** Fill the sky with a warm color from the original photograph





04a



04b

Now you can copy and paste easily wherever you are on your layer tree. Use Free Transform and size settings to change the look of buildings and place them on the scene. But be careful not to go too far with it, as they should not be too modified, these buildings are only background detail.

Use Levels to correct each object, managing their value and making them look like they are the same distance from the viewer in terms of atmospheric perspective.

**05** **The Warp tool:** Now we will be selecting places just as we did before using

parts of buildings or whole buildings, cutting them to pieces and editing them with simple transformation warps. The Warp tool can be extraordinarily useful on any area of a design. You can easily make buildings that are spherical, spirals or any other cool shape.

Do not be afraid to flip or shrink versions of the same custom shape to build the weirdest ideas for your buildings. It is wise to use Hide Selection (Ctrl+H) here and in the rest of the process so you can see what the selection will look like when it is integrated into the image. Like before, use Levels to help the buildings fit into the scene. ▶

**04a** Use the Selection and Adjustment tools to 2 change the look of buildings slightly

**04b** The buildings are now starting to look much more futuristic

**05a** A simple warp can be used to easily alter a selection into any shape

**05b** Use Levels to then fit your new shapes into the scene



**05a**



**05b**



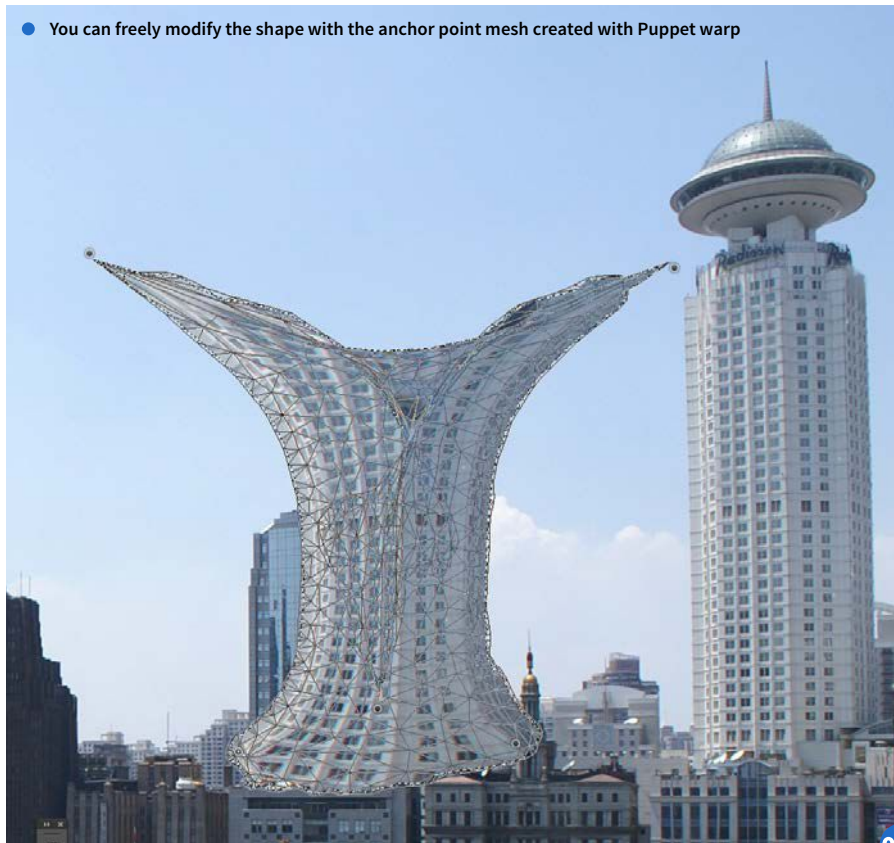
**“By clicking Puppet Warp you add anchor points, and Photoshop will make a sort of mesh with which you can modify the shape freely”**

**06** **Using Puppet Warp:** Here we will be doing awesome futuristic stuff, but do not make too many of them in the scene. Instead try to avoid selecting white or very dark areas. After you pick and place your building materials like before, use Puppet Warp (Edit > Puppet Warp). By clicking Puppet Warp you add anchor points, and Photoshop will make a sort of mesh with which you can modify the shape freely. With the Alt button you can also remove pins and rotate those anchors. Use your imagination and courage when editing the object, then hit accept with Enter.

**07** **Grass:** Now we will slow down from warp speed to chill out, flip the image horizontally and see how things look. With one of the Selection tools, select the grass you like from your piece or use another reference material. Copy and paste on the layers and start to multi-copy and place them properly, paying attention to the value of the grass.

If you decide to not have vegetation in your art, it is up to you to at least add some cityscape silhouettes into the background at this stage. You can find some cool cityscape silhouette brushes included in the download resources for this tutorial. This stage is to rest a little bit from all the warping in the previous stages, and find the balance between the human made and natural elements, and simply to clean up this mess. ▶

● You can freely modify the shape with the anchor point mesh created with Puppet warp

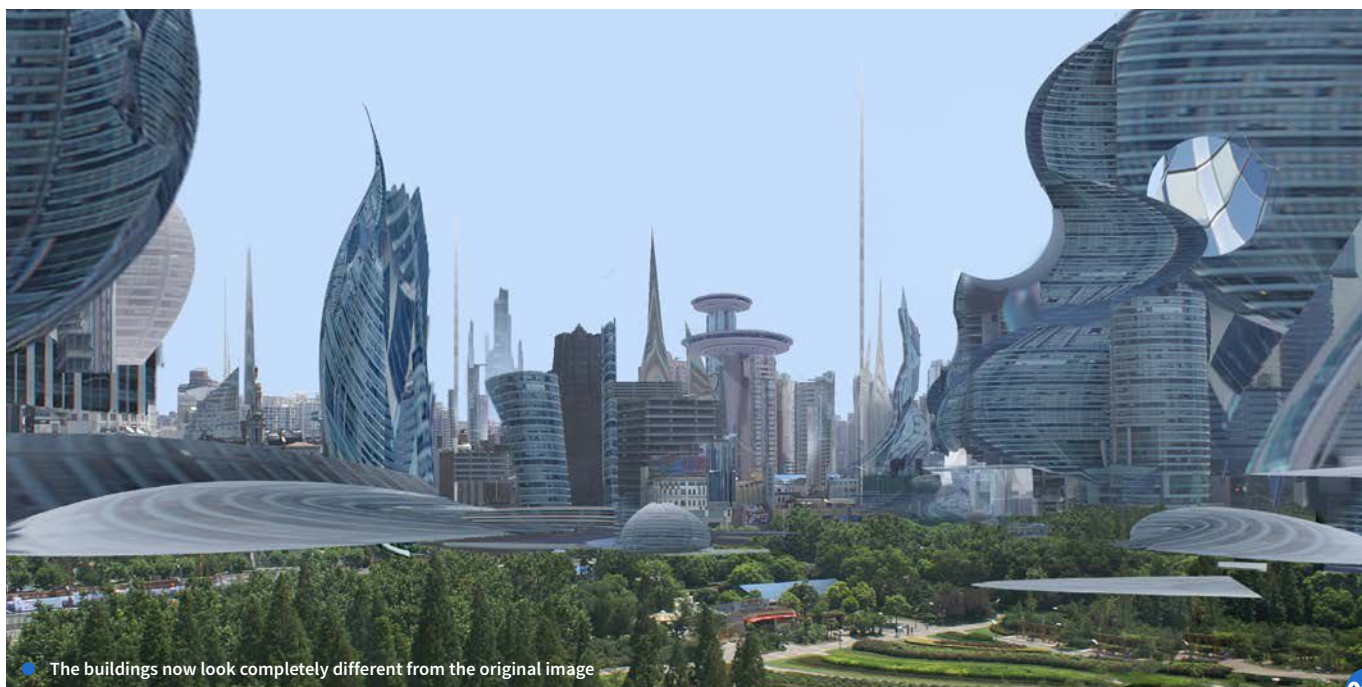


06a

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Check values

Value will be important in your life; all artists are constantly checking value after flipping their images. You can easily check your values by making the top layer a black filled layer and changing the blend mode to Color. This blocks all of the image's color so you can focus on the value. There are many ways to make your picture black and white though. Looking at the values is an important tool to making your picture better.

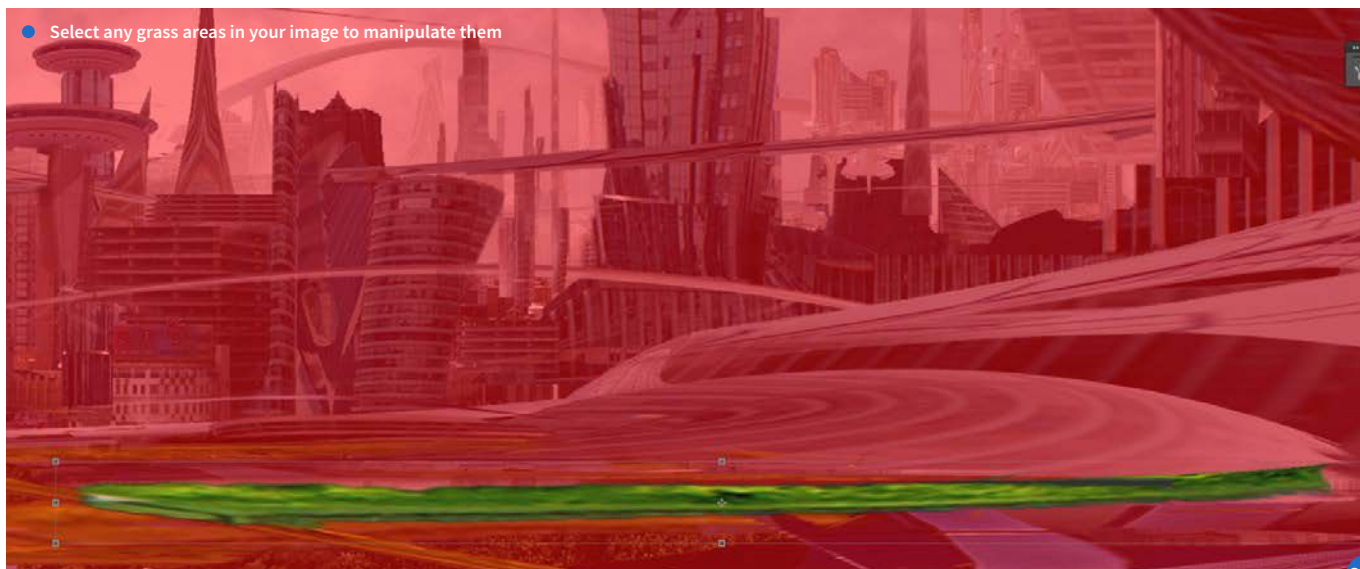


● The buildings now look completely different from the original image

06b



- Select any grass areas in your image to manipulate them



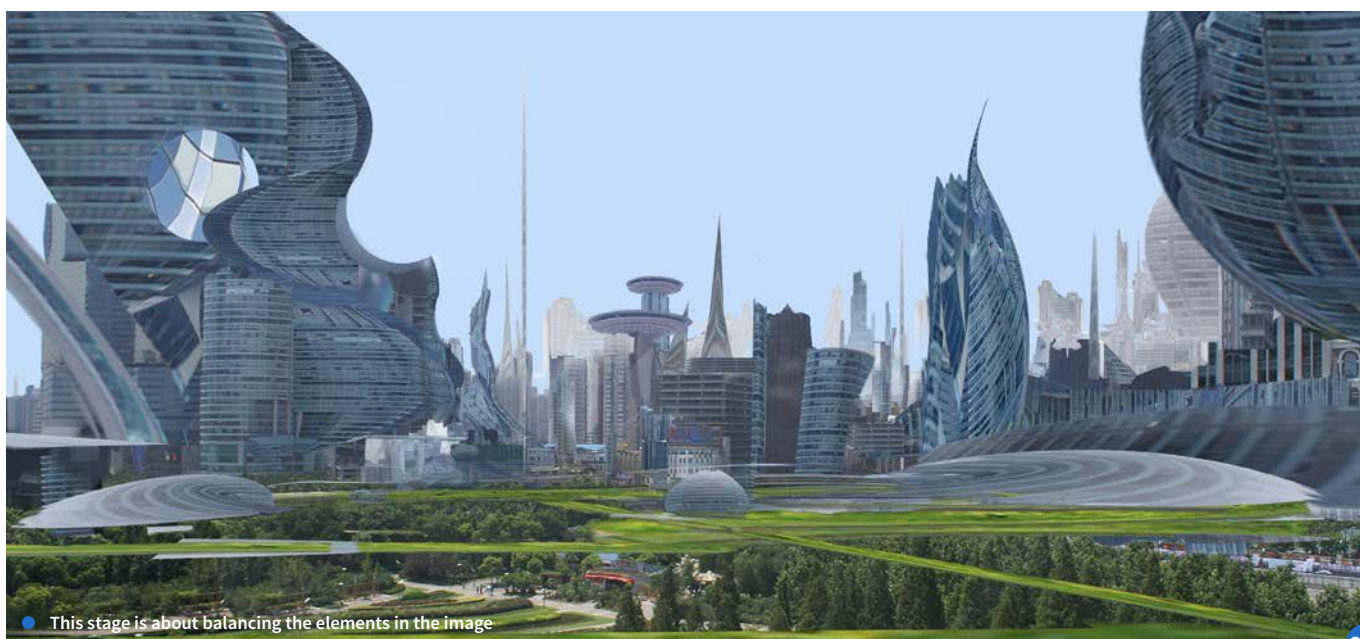
07a

- If you do not have green areas, use silhouettes to add to the background



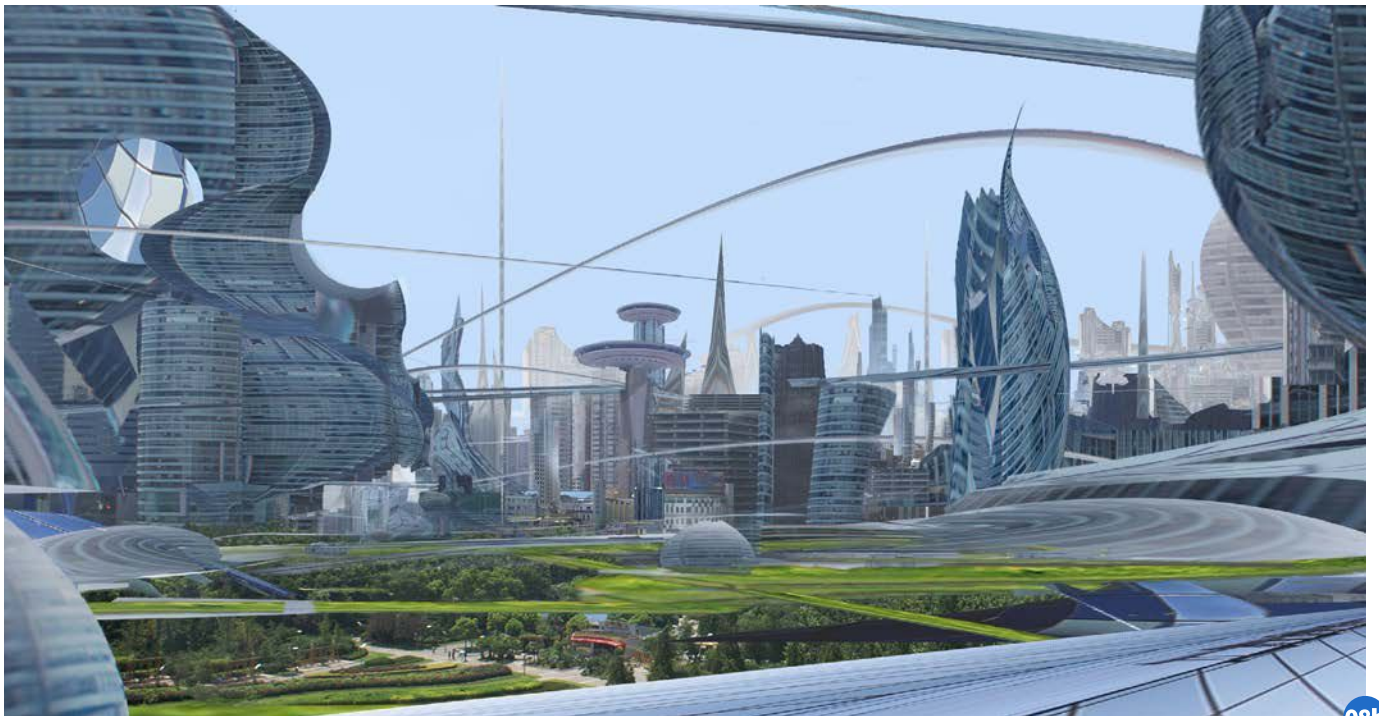
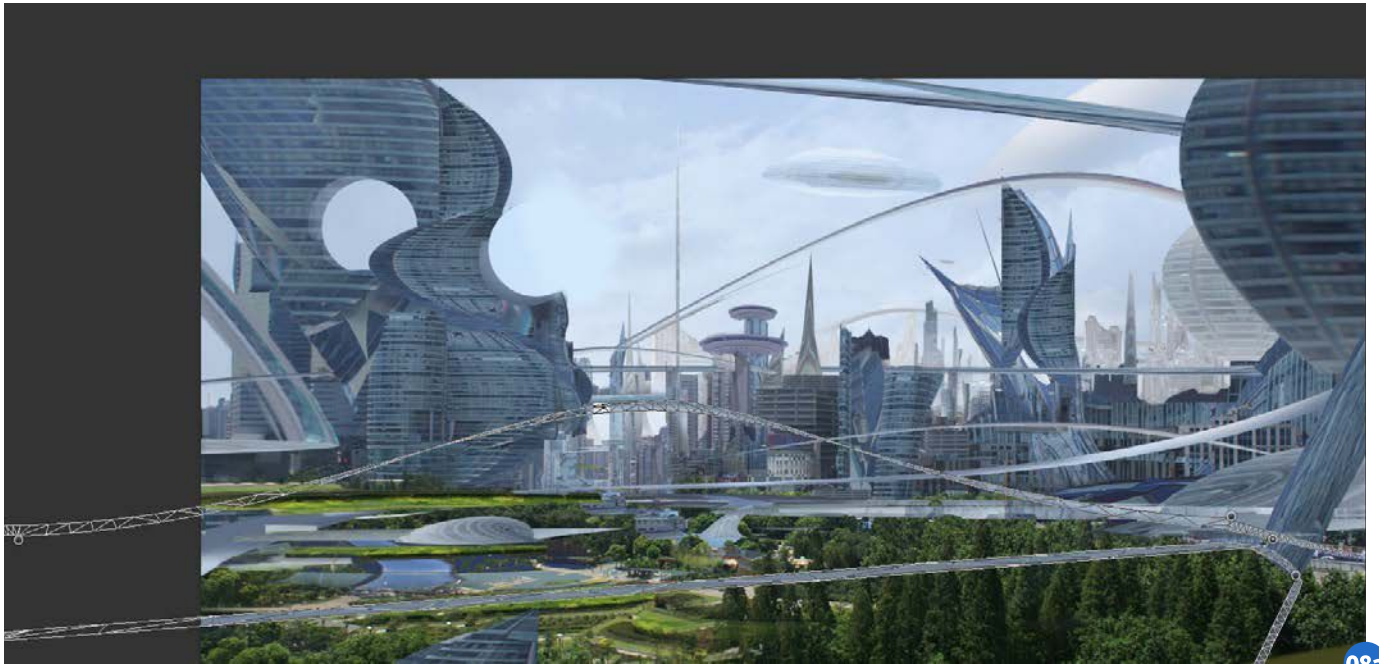
07b

- This stage is about balancing the elements in the image



07c





**08** **Where are the Streets?** This step is for using all the awesome warps and transformation tools we used before to multiply the same content. But the main point is to stretch or curve the content over the limits of the canvas and make smooth lines for the streets.

We must use all the tools available to make the long and spiky stuff. Trying to make a perfect curved street with only the Perspective transformation usually won't work. It is better to use a couple of different warp tools; you can also take advantage of the Photoshop history tool rather than using only one tool. As you make a couple of your weird streets, choose the best one

and use it a couple of times, sometimes smaller in the background, or flipped or rotated. The line and geometry will remain and this will improve the visual coherency of the design. All these streets and lines are compositional repair kits to be used if you need them.

**09** **Sky and reflections:** I said there would be reflections and here we are! But first let's fix the sky; we are going back to our filled sky from the beginning, at the same time I am finding some cool looking clouds from [freetextures.3dtotal.com](http://freetextures.3dtotal.com). Paste the clouds above the sky in the layer panel, and create a clipping mask by using Alt and left-clicking in the middle

**"It is also important that the reflection should not have stronger values than the original object. It should also have some distortion"**

between layers on the Layer panel. As the layers are connected you can easily move and rotate the clouds in relation with the marked sky.

I decide to have big mirrored glass-like plates in my piece with reflections. To do this first, you must select your whole picture and use Copy Merged, then flip it vertically and paste it on a new layer and hide. Use the Lasso tool to select

the places where you want to see reflections and, like before, make a new layer from the selection. Fill this with white and then clip the merged picture to this layer.

You should edit the position of the reflection, and it is also important that the reflection should not have stronger values than the original object. It should also have some distortion.

**10 Flipping and focal points:** You should flip the canvas horizontally again, and it is also important that the reflection should not have stronger values than the original object. It should also have some distortion. It is important to do this after the flip so you can see the painting with a fresh eye and, see where composition, lines and shapes on the picture will lead you.

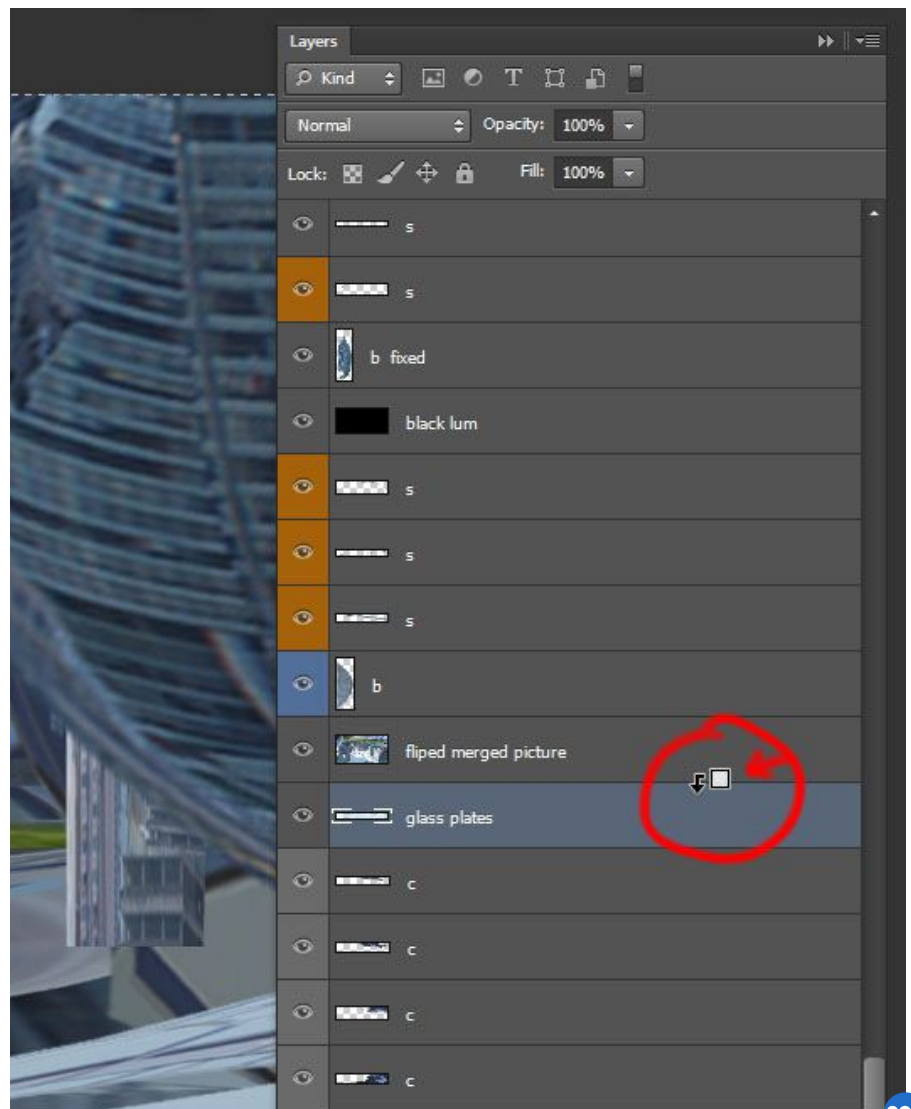
I also suggest that you choose only two focal points but it is up to you. Remember that the more focal points there are the more attractions ▶

**08a** Use warp and transform tools to stretch and curve smooth lines to form streets

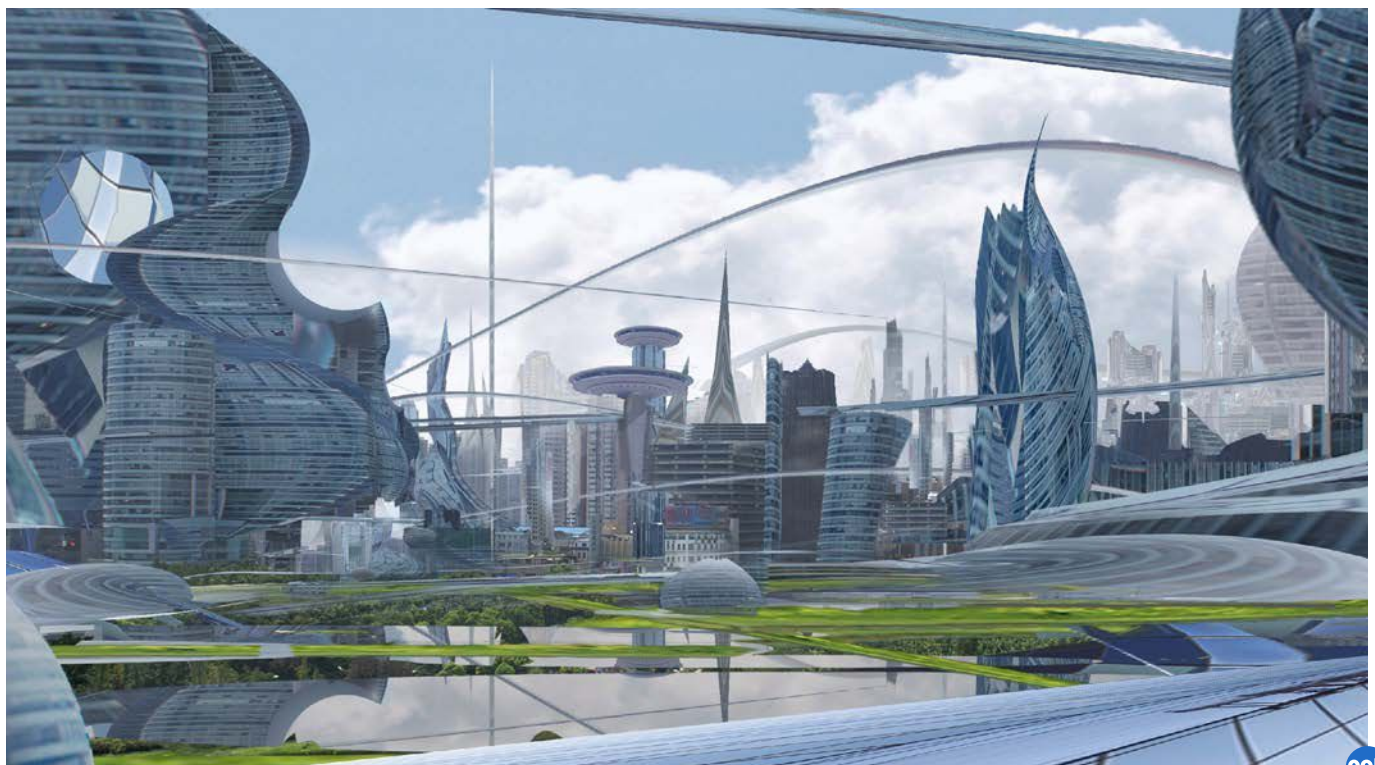
**08b** These streets will improve the visual coherency of the design

**09a** Use a clipping mask to attach a flipped, merged picture to a glass plates layer

**09b** The addition of clouds and their reflection of the clouds increases the sense of a glass city



09a



09b



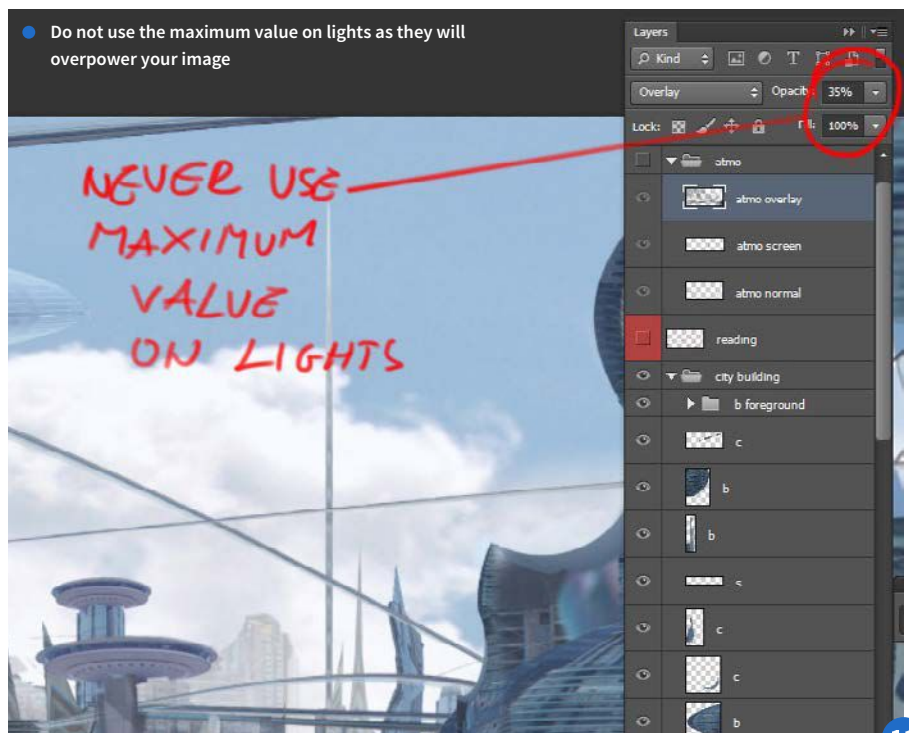
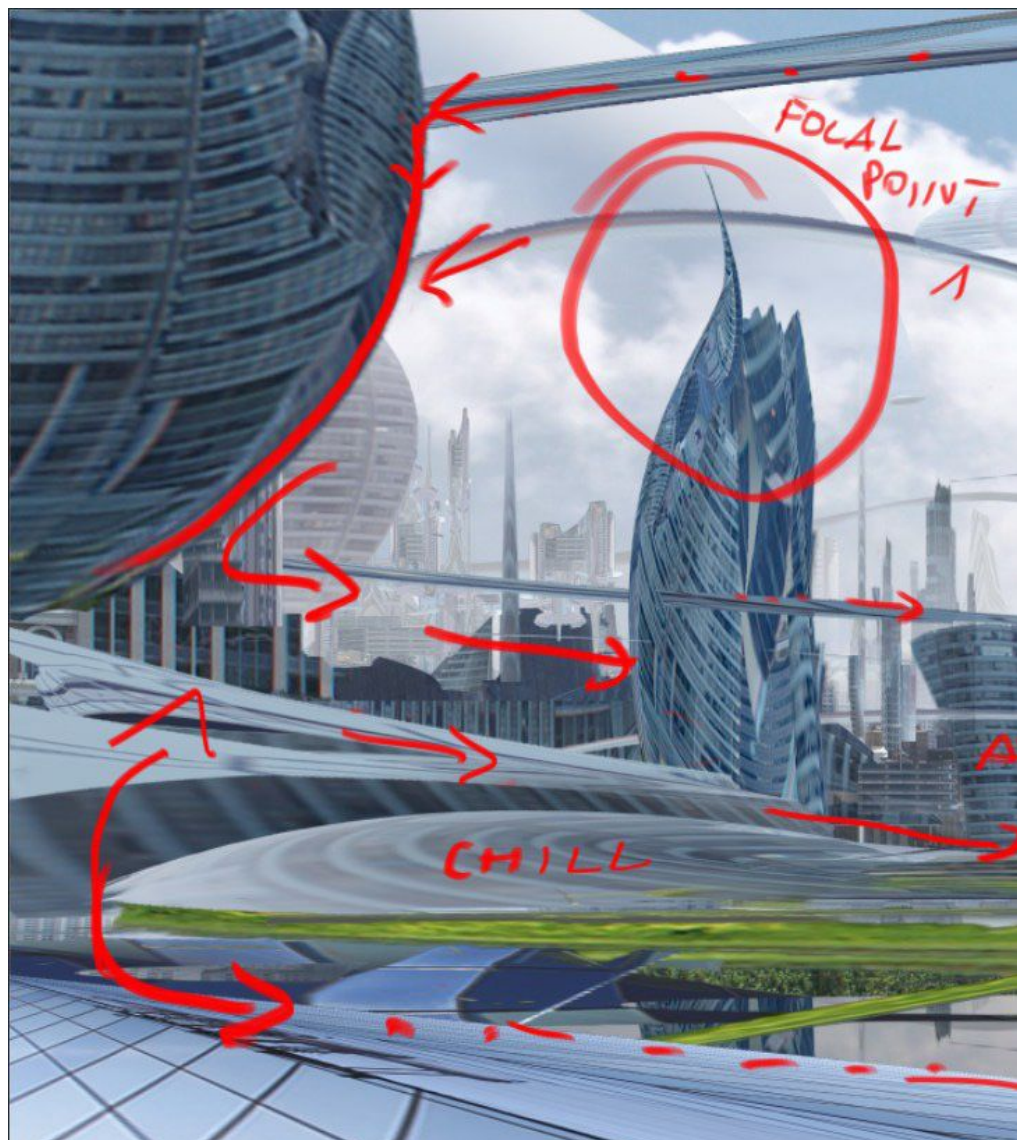
you must give to the viewer on the way, making the path for the eye easily readable. You must be honest with yourself; if something is wrong, make a new layer and try to fix it by cloning content we already made with the Clone Stamp tool, or by going back to layers and fixing your mistakes.

**11 Depth and light beams:** Next we will be adding depth and light beams to the scene, then after we will manage the focal points and lead the eye down paths once we know what we are doing. Use the Airbrush with the Lasso tool to add some depth and expose the most interesting places from your picture or hide others in fog. Here we will also add light beams, but do not let them rule your picture, they are meant to be accents like streets which should help sell your piece to the viewer. Here you should paint with the Airbrush, and for the light beams use a mixture of the Overlay, Normal and Screen blending modes on different layers.

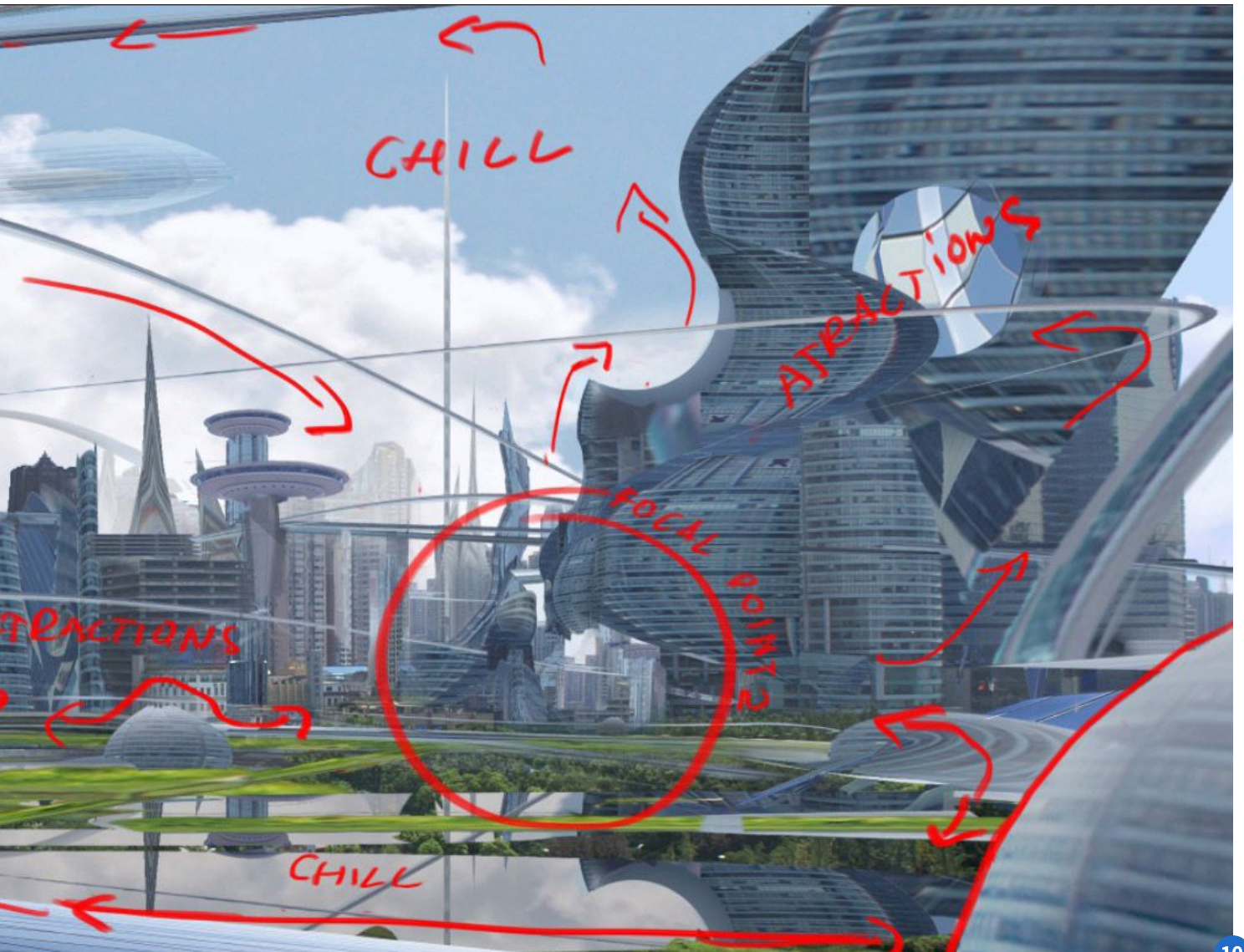
**12 Overlay and Smart Sharpen:** Usually at this stage I am having fun with effects on a layer at the top of the Layer panel, painting on an Overlay layer and sharpening focal points. The point is that it is good at this point to take care to manage stuff like contrast, gamma, color and saturation. Also I have a mask clipped to it. The next step is to make another layer with Overlay as the blending mode. Paint on it with a low opacity with white to only highlight some parts of your piece. Paint with black to make an overall deeper value.

The last touch I make before the sign is to use Smart Sharpen only on focal points and elements at the same distance. Mostly I am cheating with Sharpness depending on what looks good to me, and I do the same as with the Blur filter.

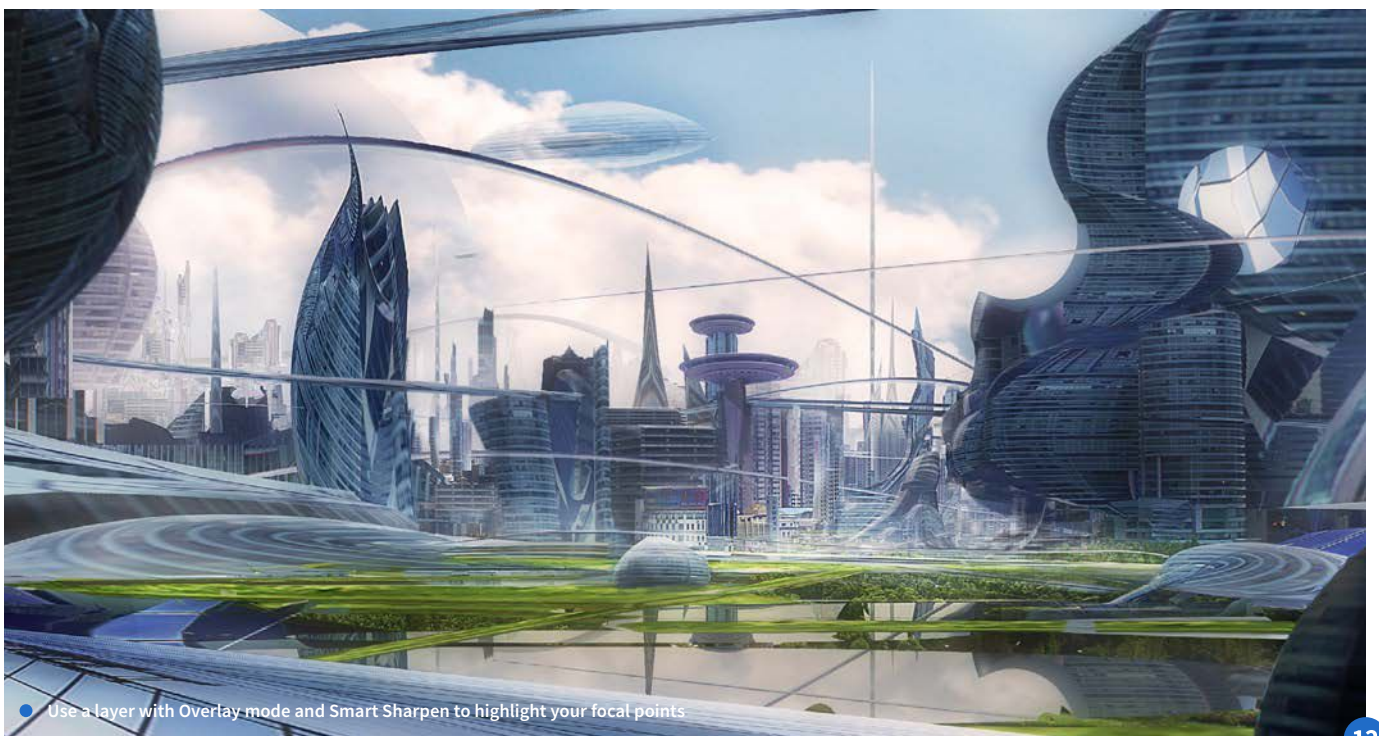
**13 That's it:** So, here we are, at the end. If everything goes nice and smooth you now have a fancy glass city, and you have learned some nice tricks that can be used in many fields. Remember that it is up to you how you will be using your tools, and to do some exploration as well. The weird connections you make when experimenting can get you really cool effects, so have lots of fun with it and be willing to explore. ●







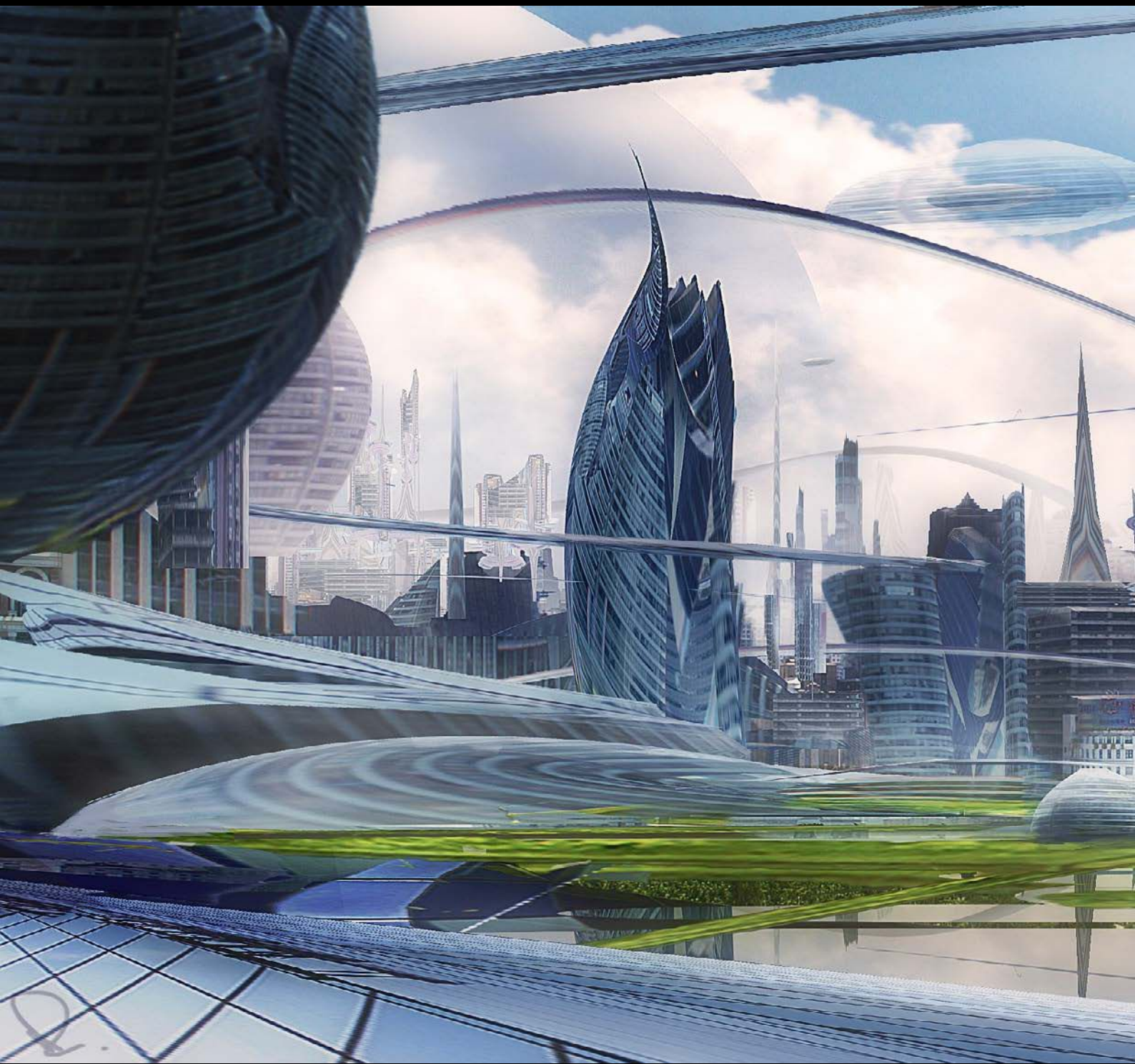
10



● Use a layer with Overlay mode and Smart Sharpen to highlight your focal points

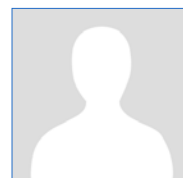
12





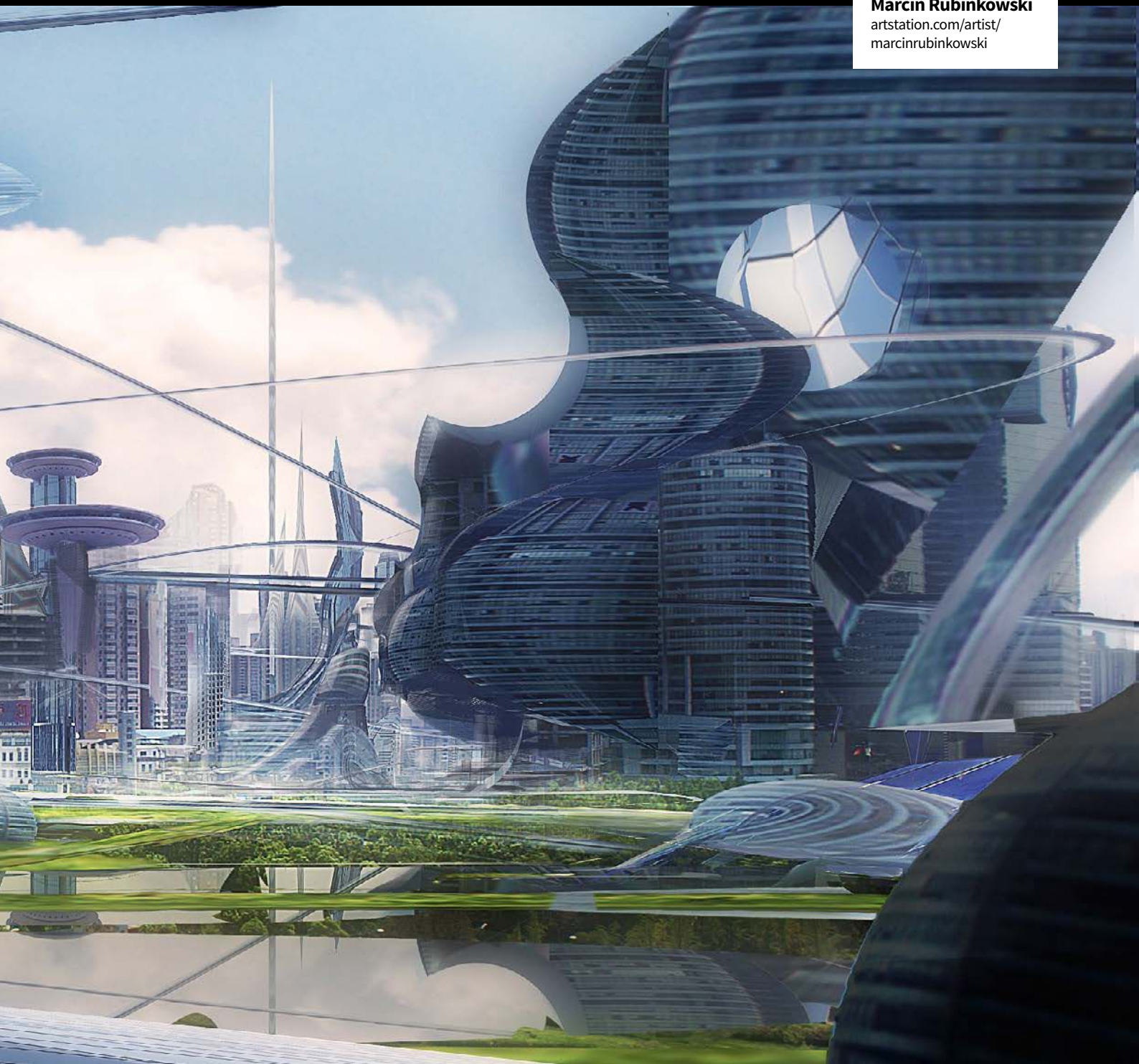


## The Artist



**Marcin Rubinkowski**

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# Build a sci-fi environment in Photoshop

Discover how José Julián Londoño Calle creates an amazing sci-fi environment from a simple landscape photograph using Photoshop [▶](#)

## The Artist



**José Julián  
Londoño Calle**

[artstation.com/artist/  
handsdigitalstudio](http://artstation.com/artist/handsdigitalstudio)

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

José Julián Londoño Calle is a graphic designer who has been studying concept art and matte painting since 2014. He has worked as a university lecturer in Design for the last seven years; he also works as a mentor for the Facet Visual Effects School in Mexico.





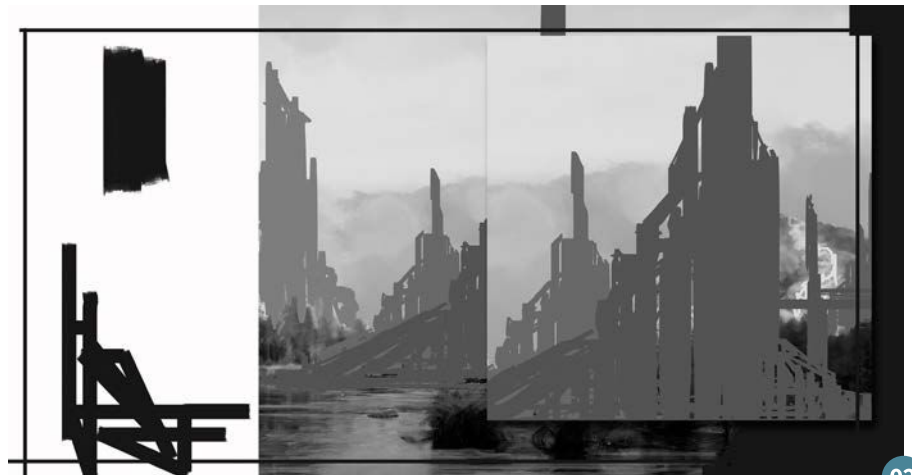
## Learn pro tips for building a sci-fi environment using a photographic base...

For this making of I discuss my workflow, and how I developed the image from a simple photograph of a landscape, to a sci-fi environment by structuring the elements from the given space in the picture. In this case, through managing perspective, we achieve a nice final result. The colorimetry is born of the colors of the image this will allow us to concentrate on the composition and construction of elements.



01

**01 Exploration:** The first stage of development for this concept was made from a photograph, on which I start painting by selecting the tonal values that exist in photography at different distances using the Eyedropper tool (I); this allows me to make selections of the areas to be sketched.



02

**02 Establishing the forms:** In this step I focused on better establishing the forms; I thought about the light direction and how it affects the mid-plane of the image. The central structure is the main element of the composition and must have a greater emphasis on detail than anything else.



03



04



05

**03 Formalizing the main structure:** I used the Polygonal Lasso tool (Shift+L) to select certain areas of the main structure and paint over it, while always thinking about the depth of the image. By controlling the sense of depth I was able to more clearly get across the purpose of the structure.

**04 Defining the structure:** I used textures in Multiply mode to add details to the main structure. I also made use of the Dodge and Burn tools to lighten and darken areas to generate a sense of depth to the components of the structure.

**05 Creating the details and peripheral elements:** At this point, the structure contains a lot of detail, and I needed to think about the flow, contrast and correct lighting of the different areas of the structure, and the surrounding details. In this case, the elements in the foreground and middleground, and the different details, help to bring a sense of realism to the concept.

**06 First color corrections:** To allow for better control of the composition I corrected the colors in the details and elements, which helped to integrate them into the whole ►

**02** Straight lines, with angular cuts that generate rhythm, help to give a more sci-fi look

**03** Overexposing the image is a good way to define edges and contours

**04** Being aware of the volume of the structure is important, especially when adding detail to the final composition

**05** It is essential that the lighting is located in the right places





06



07



08



09

image. It was also a good idea for me to play with the position of the main structure because this helped to find the best looking composition.

tone, reinforced some of the design elements of the main structure. This allowed some lights to shine more than others, generating detail. ●

**08** To generate an interesting atmosphere, it is useful to paint within different selections of the concept

**09** Use the Motion Blur tool to defocus the foreground

**10** With a particle brush you can generate different elements that are in the air, creating the sensation of movement from wind

**07** **Developing the sci-fi look:** At this point it was important to start adding all those little details that develop the concept's back-story. These included other buildings, planets, and moons; they really helped to show the setting of the piece and increase the sci-fi feel. To add more realism to the piece I added different textures in Multiply mode.

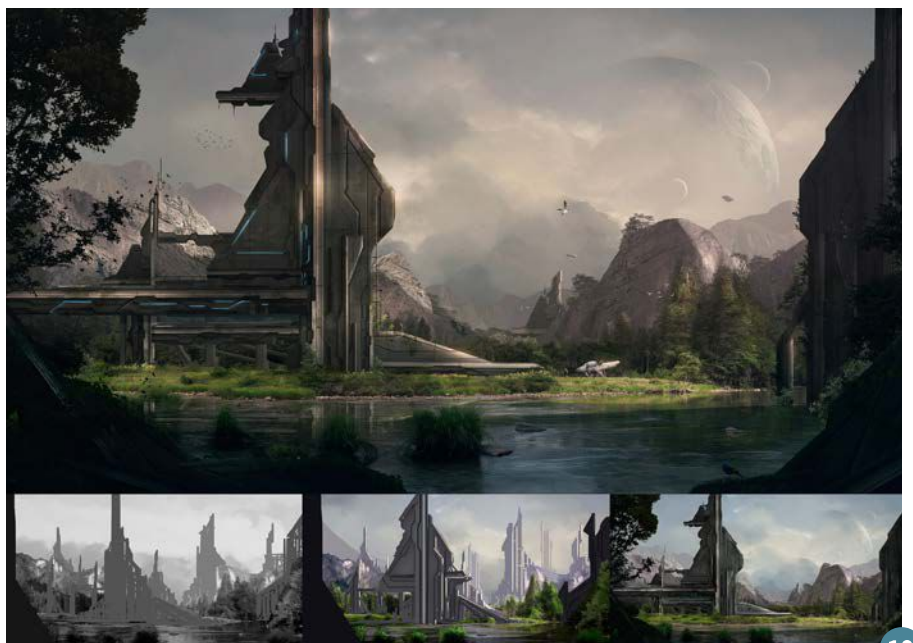
**06** It is important to explore different placements of the main structure

**07** The Lasso tool is great for selecting areas to highlight the main structure

**08** **Adding illumination:** To add lighting and illumination to the whole piece, I copied everything into a new layer set to Lighten Blending mode, which helped to separate some of the elements by overexposing the light. When integrating things into the environment, it was important that I used the same color temperature as the concept to add lights and keep the color correction accurate.

**09** **Details and final render:** I used the same process as the previous step to emphasize different elements of the composition. By using the same elements and designs I created small vehicles, which generated more interest within the concept.

**10** **Lighting inside the main structure:** To finish the image I made a new layer set to Lighten Blending mode, and with an electric blue



10





## The Artist



**José Julián  
Londoño Calle**

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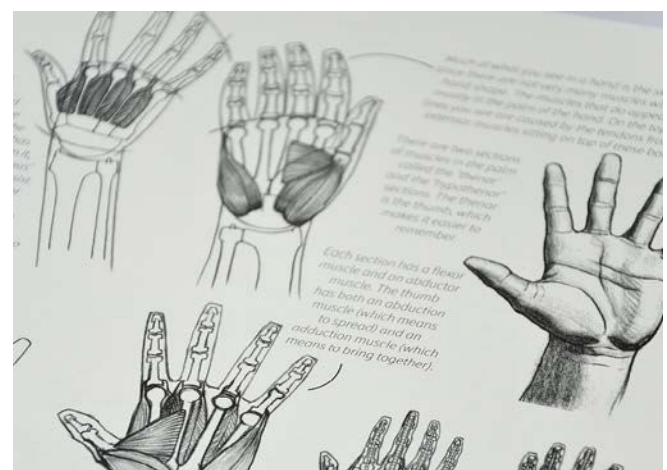
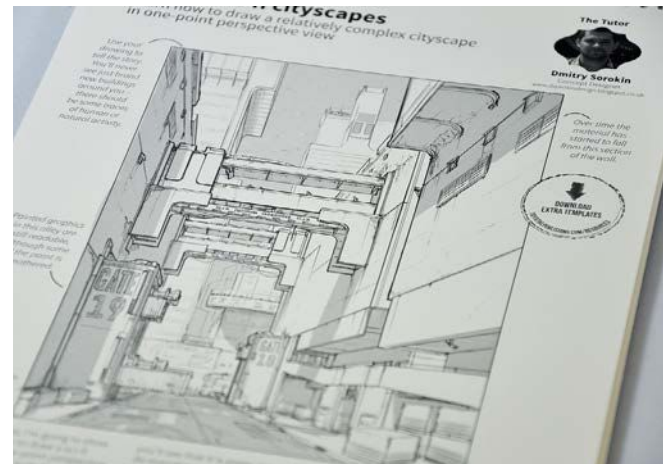
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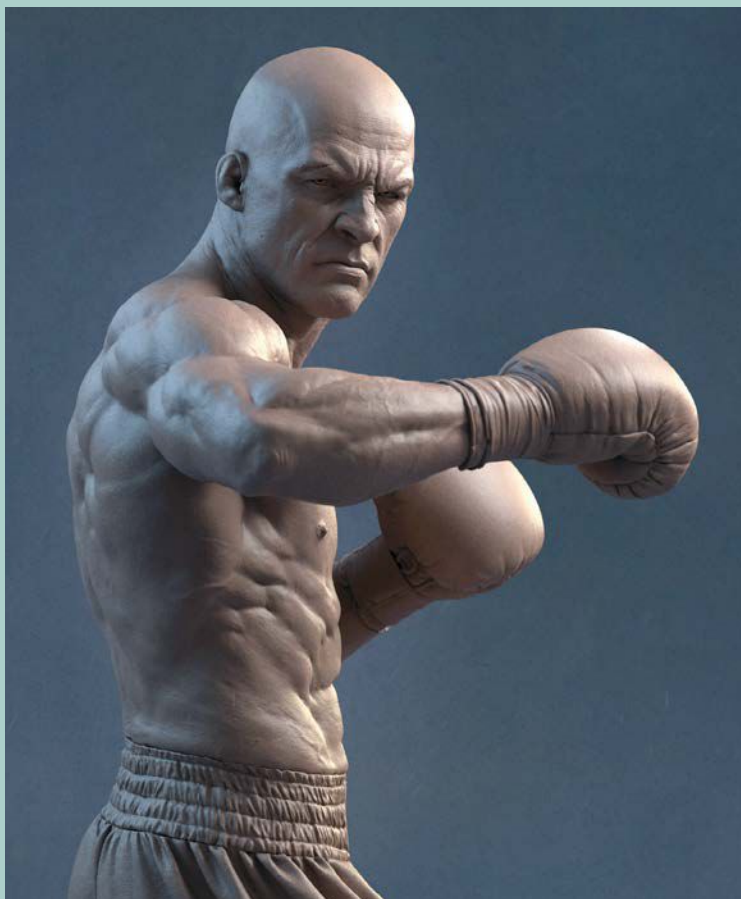
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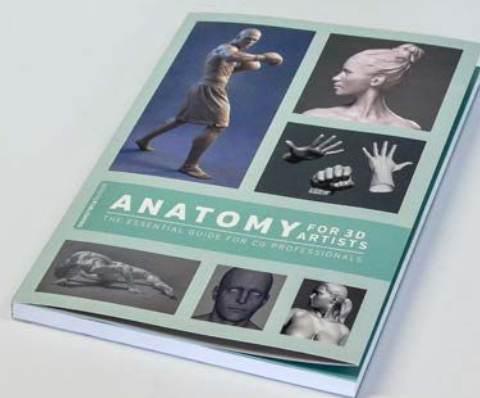
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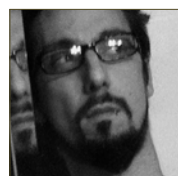
by Bastien Lecouffe Deharme

Illustrator and digital painting instructor Bastien Lecouffe  
Deharme demonstrates how he creates his stunning portraits ▶





## The Artist



**Bastien Lecouffe  
Deharme**

[deharme.com](http://deharme.com)

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Bastien Lecouffe Deharme is a French illustrator and digital painting instructor now based in the US. He has worked professionally since 2005 on numerous illustrations for books, magazines and games.



The piece *Hecate* is the first one of a personal project, based on the portraits of famous, mystical and esoteric characters from various mythologies. My idea was to use those portraits as allegories for larger concepts, developed with pictures and short texts. I wanted to start with a “key” character, someone whose name echoes with obscure and strong meaning. But I also wanted to avoid creating some kind of copy of the traditional representations.

I will spare you the speech about Hecate’s symbolic system and my personal interpretation of the character for the project, and jump directly into the topic: how did I build this picture? I will focus this tutorial on the following aspects: initial sketches and references, painting the figure, details and ornaments, and accidents and textures during the final touch-up stage. Hecate was born after two days of work using Photoshop.

#### Sketches and references

First step; the initial sketches. When I get a little amount of time to work on personal stuff, I usually enjoy sketching on paper. It’s an opportunity to reconnect with traditional media. Plus, it’s always really nice to have an original drawing to exhibit with the digital prints when I show my work.

**“I have my own photo studio and a gigantic database of anatomic references on my computer, but for this picture I wanted to work with a specific model”**

For this image I wanted to obtain an “iconic” representation, reflecting the godly status of the goddess. At this step, just by brainstorming around the concept, I already had a clear idea of the main elements and the global composition: a simple figure, yet with an imperial posture and an inquisitive look in her eyes; a bunch of ravens; a key; some gold ornaments and hand gestures that suggested power and authority.

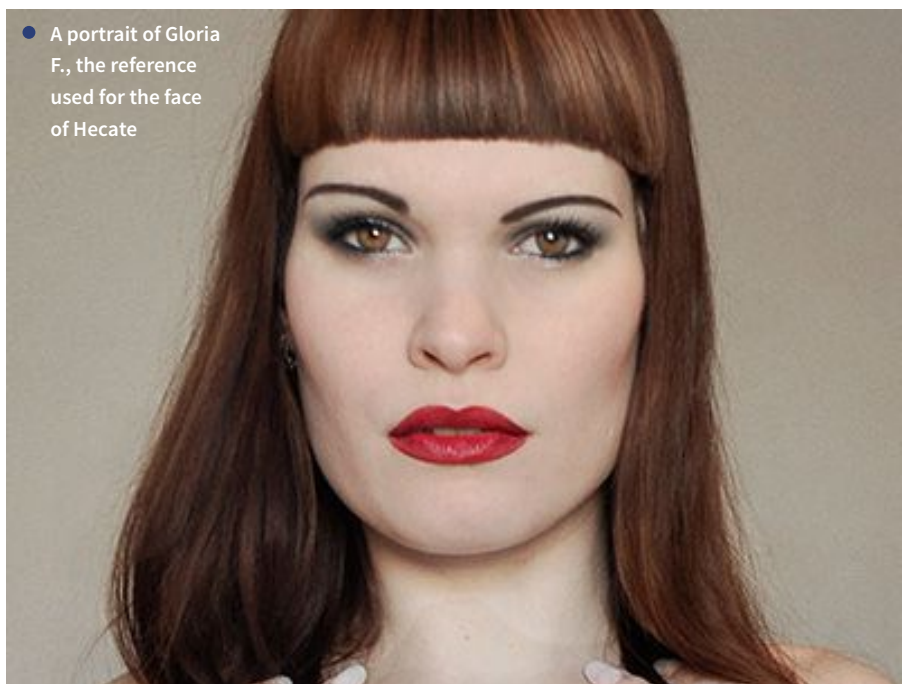
From all that came the sketch. At this point I decided to suggest the three aspects of Hecate by separating her arms from her body – just a random idea and an excuse for me to add some graphic originality.

I always work with references, especially for this kind of composition based on a figure.

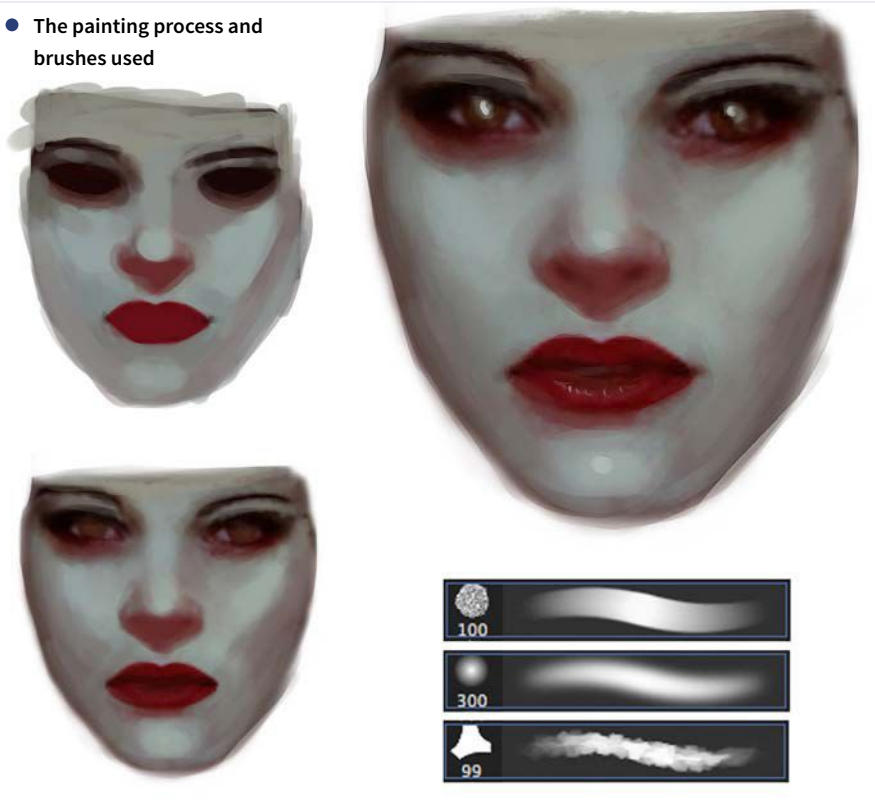
- The final sketch, a result of several attempts to block a composition



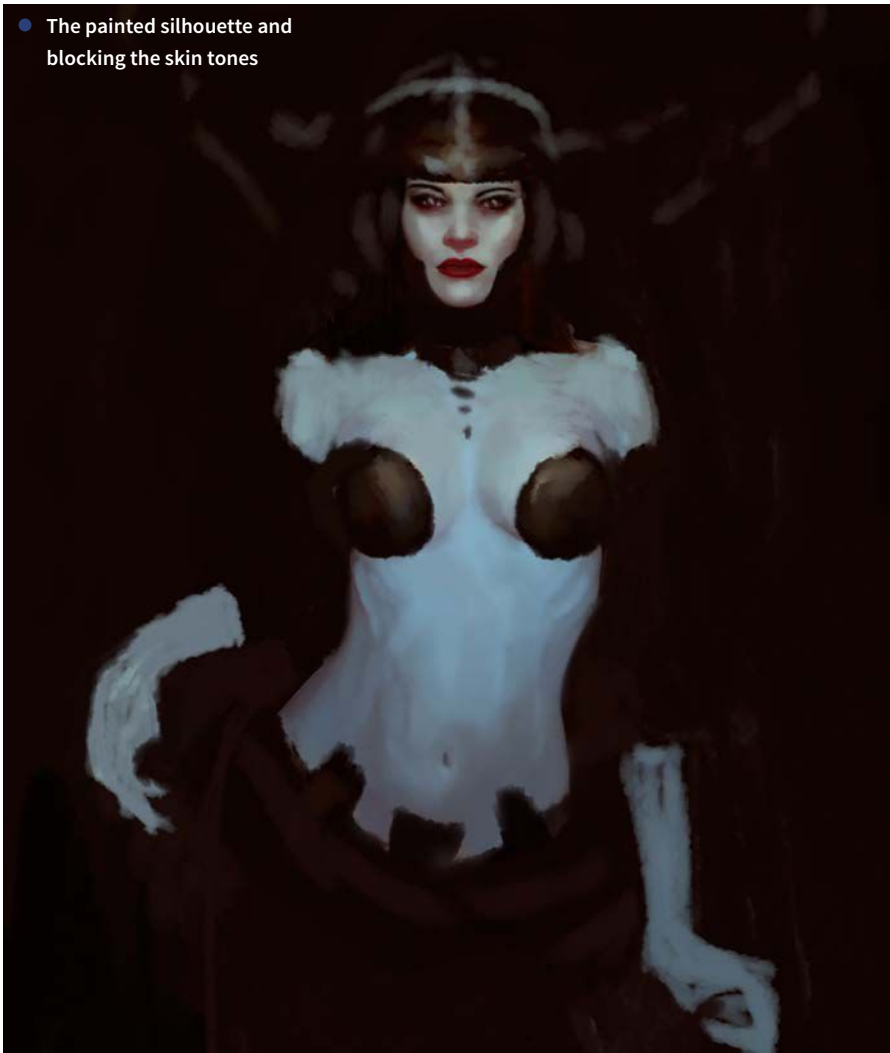
- A portrait of Gloria F., the reference used for the face of Hecate



- The painting process and brushes used



- The painted silhouette and blocking the skin tones



I have my own photo studio and a gigantic database of anatomic references on my computer, but for this picture I wanted to work with a specific model; Gloria, who lives in France. I sent her the sketches and she sent me a few references that I could use to paint her.

#### Painting the figure

Anatomy has always been an essential focus point in my artwork. I enjoy drawing and painting the body; its strength, pride and weaknesses, confronted by a tough environment. As I always shoot for realistic figures, I work on bodies with photographic references on the side, or sometimes directly importing elements and starting to paint from that.

A photographic detail can be used as the first five pieces of a large puzzle, from where it's easy to eye-drop and start painting with good values and skin tones.

For *Hecate* I simply started to paint with the portrait of Gloria reference to the side. I used three custom “painting” brushes that I enjoy. The first one was sharp; I used it to block volumes and build the values.

The second one was round and soft and I used it to smooth the sharp lines and give the face some more realistic shapes.

The last one was perfect to blend everything together to give a “painterly” render. Then it was all about spending the right amount of time painting, starting with the overall figure first and slowly getting into the details.



### Ornaments and details

I wanted this illustration to have a reverent tone. A portrait of an imperial goddess. This included working on all the details of her head-dress. The complexity of the ornaments was there to contrast with the bare nudity of the character.

I also used the details to compose the picture, dragging the eyes of the viewer to the head and the eyes of Hecate; herself staring at the viewer. To work on the ornaments and jewelry, I decided to collect photographs of engraved plates, vases and frames, randomly put together to create a full layer of engraved gold.

Then I just had to cut, paste, erase, duplicate and have fun with these elements until everything was in the right place. I applied the gold texture over the figure, using a layer set to Screen mode. Screen mode is usually too bright, but works here because the overall texture was already very dark, with just a small amount of bright spots.

As I enjoy the energy of drawing and painting – I usually quickly run out of patience when working on tiny little details. I get bored when drawing requires a magnifying glass. That's the reason why I focus more on the impression of detail, suggesting them more than really painting them.

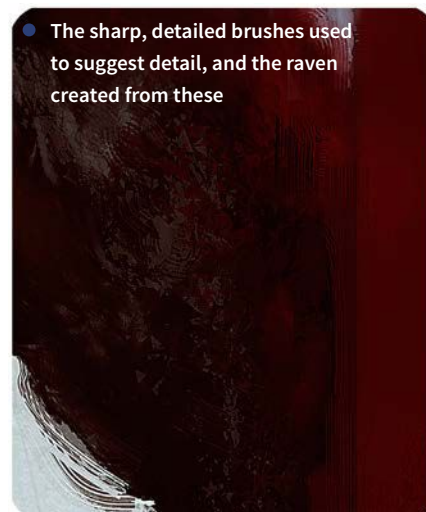
To achieve this result, I created some sharp and detailed brushes. I also used these brushes to paint the ravens (also from references); the abstract texture of their bodies and also the sides of Hecate's legs.

### Accidents and textures

The image was now almost done, the composition stable and all the elements were in place. From the previous step in the process, a lot of happy accidents or side effects happened, whether it was some brushstrokes that went a bit crazy, an overlay layer that went over the lines or a texture that was applied in the wrong place.

This last step was about making choices; what to keep and what to get rid of. I also needed to think about how best to take advantage of all those happy accidents. These are considerations that I keep in mind throughout the process, but I always give them one last thought before I decide if the picture is finished or not.

For *Hecate* I decided to take advantage of the randomness of the head-dress's ornaments and started to paint a bit more around it. That led me to paint (on a Color Dodge mode layer) the geometric yellow lines, suggesting some kind of magic and esotericism.



- Close-up of random accidents that I decided to keep





**“The vertical dynamic is an element common to most of my pictures, but I feel that it really worked with this specific piece, giving Hecate the strong posture I wanted”**

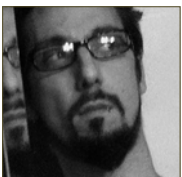
#### Conclusion

*Hecate* is a very simple piece. Now that I can look at it with objectivity, with the benefit of doing this tutorial, I realize that the picture works precisely because of this simplicity. I really tried to stick to the essentials; balancing the amount of details and empty spaces, while dealing with the usual “When to stop? Did I go too far? When is it finished?” questions.

The vertical dynamic is an element common to most of my pictures, but I feel that it really worked with this specific piece, giving Hecate the strong posture I wanted.

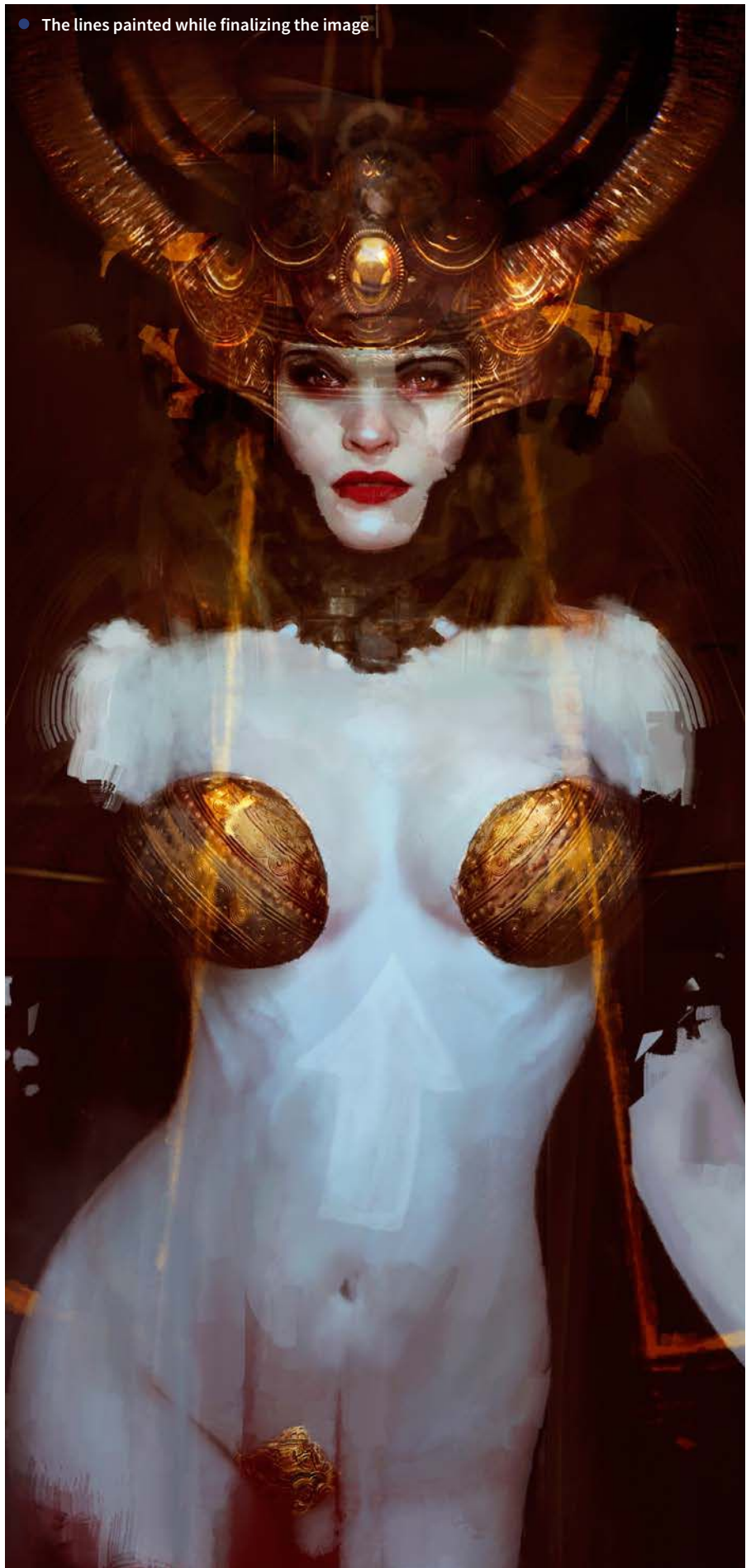
Working on it, I felt like every element fell easily into place. Most of the time I try to stay away from that feeling, because it can mean that I’m not taking the risks that I should be taking – that I’m not experimenting enough. But in this case I think the ease was a result of all the previous pieces I have experimented on before – so I was ready to just enjoy a nice workflow without struggle!

## The Artist



**Bastien Lecouffe Deharme**

deharme.com



● The lines painted while finalizing the image





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